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FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2005

Troops moving in to bolster security

U.S. stakes out Baghdad perimeter as Iraqis guard voting sites

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U.S. troops secure the street Thursday in front of the election banners of Iraqi interim prime minister Ayad Allawi in Baghdad. In preparation for Sunday's balloting for national elections, U.S. forces are stepping up operations, moving to forward positions around the capital while toughening security at their main bases, a brigade commander said.

AP

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Archdiocese sex scandal case: A man testified that the now-defrocked priest at the center of the Boston Archdiocese sex scandal would wait for him in the bathroom with the lights off, pull him from catechism classes and rape and fondle him in the church pews, confessional and rectory.

The man, now 27, recalled Wednesday how he saw Paul Shanley silhouetted against the hallway light, his hands outstretched in a priestly pose. He said the abuse began at age 6 and continued until 1989, when he was 12.

Robert Blake trial: Robert Blake's handymen was afraid police were going to raid his apartment after the actor's wife was found shot to death, a witness testified at Blake's murder trial in Los Angeles.

The handyman, Earle Caldwell, had left town before the May 2001 shooting death of Bonny Lee Bakley, according to his former girlfriend, Lisa Johnson. She said Caldwell called her the day after the shooting.

"He wanted me to go to his apartment and remove his computer, all of the paperwork on his desk, notes on a bulletin board and some sweat shirts," Johnson told jurors Wednesday. "He was afraid police would serve search warrants and he would lose his possessions."

Blake

Gay custody battle: A woman whose daughter was adopted by her former lesbian partner has filed a court battle to regain custody in Houston.

The Texas Supreme Court declined Friday to hear a request by Julie Ann Hobbs of Galveston to dismiss a lawsuit filed in May by Janet Kathleen Van Stavern for joint custody and standard visitation of the 6-year-old girl.

Hobbs and Van Stavern were together for eight years, ending in February 2004. Hobbs conceived the girl through artificial insemination and gave birth in 1998. Van Stavern adopted Hobbs' daughter in 2001.

A court date regarding Van Stavern's request for joint custody and standard visitation is set for April 4.

Michael Jackson trial: The prosecution wants jurors in Michael Jackson's molestation trial in Los Angeles to have their own screening of a British television documentary about the pop star, a show that the defense denounced as "heavily edited in the most sensational fashion possible."

Broadcast in February 2003, "Living With Michael Jackson" was the trigger for an investigation leading to Jackson's child molestation case. It contains footage of Jackson holding hands with the child who has alleged he was molested by the entertainer.

In their motion to use the tape, prosecutors said its broadcast prompted Jackson and unidentified co-conspirators to abduct and imprison the accuser and his family, and to "extort" from them an agreement to appear in a "rebuttal" video.

New BTK evidence: A package purportedly tied to the BTK serial killings was found after a local television station received notification directing it to the scene, a television station reported.

The Wichita, Kan., station KANE-TV broke into its afternoon programming Tuesday to air footage of a cereal box bearing against a traffic sign along a road, but did not disclose its contents at the request of police.

Wichita police did not return calls to The Associated Press for comment.

The postcard mailing station had the name "S. Killett" written at address of BTK's



Schwarzenegger approval ratings: California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, right, shakes hands while visiting the PATM Residential Service Center, near downtown Los Angeles, on Tuesday. A survey from the Public Institute found 60 percent of Californians favor the way the Republican governor is doing his job, but 49 percent of Democrats disapprove. Six in 10 independent voters still give Schwarzenegger high marks, but the number of independents who disapprove of him has almost doubled, from 18 percent last year to 32 percent.

first victims, the Otero family, written on the return address, KAKE reported.

Paid columnist: President Bush ordered his Cabinet secretaries not to hire columnists to promote administration agendas after disclosure that a second writer had been paid to assist an agency.

"All our Cabinet secretaries must realize that we will not be paying commentators to advance our agenda," Bush said at a news conference. "Our agenda ought to be able to stand on its own two feet."

Bush's remarks came a day after syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher apologized to readers for not disclosing a \$21,500 contract with the Health and Human Services Department to help create materials promoting the agency's \$300 million initiative to encourage marriage.

Three-strikes sentence: If she were a prosecutor anywhere else in California, San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris wouldn't get a second look for using the state's tough "three-strikes" law against a man who spent more than six years in prison after setting his 6-year-old son on fire.

But with Charley Charles, formerly known as Charles Rothenberg, heading to trial Thursday on weapons-possession charges that could send him to prison for life, Harris faced a battle against the social climate in one of the nation's most tolerant cities.

Charles' case is also watched because of his past. When he was known as Charles Rothenberg, he soaked his son with kerosene and set him ablaze in a Southern California motel amid a custody dispute with the boy's mother. The boy, David, survived but suffered third-degree burns over 90 percent of his body.

Suspended judge resigns: Concord, N.H., Judge Franklin Jones, suspended for groping five women at a conference last year, resigned hours after a committee emphatically recommended that he not get his job back.

"I wish to again express my apologies to those who have been impacted by my inappropriate conduct," the Rochester District Court judge said in a letter to Gov. John

Lynch and other state officials.

Jones, 56, he said he regrets any embarrassment he may have caused the judiciary.

World

Zhao memorial service: China said Thursday it will hold a weekend memorial for ousted Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang as authorities kept a tight watch on activists in an apparent effort to stem any public commemoration.

The "body farewell ceremony" will take place at 9 a.m. Saturday at Babaoshan Cemetery in Beijing, the main cemetery for revolutionary heroes, said a Chinese Cabinet official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said foreign reporters are barred from the event, which has a lower status than a state funeral.

Trouble in Sudan: The U.N. envoy to Sudan on Thursday called for the immediate release of three Sudanese employees of an American Christian aid agency who were abducted last month in South Darfur.

The workers, well-drillers of the Maryland-based Adventist Development and Relief Agency International, were captured at gunpoint on Dec. 16, according to the aid agency.

Violence between rebels and the government has plagued the Darfur region for nearly two years, killing over 70,000 people and displacing over 2 million.

Jan Frank, the U.N. envoy to Sudan, said the responsible groups would "be held accountable for their acts," according to a U.N. statement.

Weapons ban in West Bank: The Palestinian leadership banned civilians on Thursday from carrying weapons, its latest step aimed at reining in militant violence, as the Palestinian leader said he was awaiting Israel's response on a proposal for a mutual cease-fire declaration.

If enforced, the ban on weapons would be a strong move against militant groups, whose gunmen often openly brandish their automatic weapons in the streets of Gaza and the West Bank — reflecting the lack of control by the Palestinian security forces.

In the next step to impose order, the Palestinian security forces were preparing to move into the volatile southern Gaza Strip to prevent rocket and other attacks into Israel, extending their control from the northern part of Gaza, where they deployed earlier.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Charles

U.S. troops hike Iraq election security

By CHRIS TOMLINSON

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — U.S. soldiers around Baghdad stepped up operations Thursday ahead of the Iraqi election, moving to forward positions around the capital until the end of balloting while toughening security at their main bases, a brigade commander said.

Hundreds of soldiers assigned to the Louisiana National Guard's 256th Brigade moved out from Camp Liberty, located about 30 miles north of Baghdad, to take up positions at the smaller bases scattered around the city ahead of Sunday's vote.

U.S. troops will not be positioned at polling sites — Iraqi forces will be on guard there. But deploying more troops outside of the main, heavily guarded bases will enable them to respond quickly if needed by Iraqi forces, said Brig. Gen. John Basilica. "We're hoping to enable the Iraqi security

GI's move to forward positions, base security boosted

forces to be successful in defending the polling sites so their countrymen can vote," said Basilica, the commander of the brigade. "It's a critical time for them."

At the same time, security at the main U.S. bases will be ratcheted up to protect support troops from attack, Basilica said.

Altogether, about 300,000 Iraqi and multinational troops will provide security for the vote with Iraq's U.S.-trained forces taking the lead role.

The Iraqi Defense Ministry said Thursday it would deploy an additional three battalions, or 2,500 troops, to help guard the elections. "We will prevent any terrorist attacks during the voting," the ministry said in a statement.

Insurgents have promised to disrupt the voting with car bombings and other attacks, and U.S. and Iraqi officials have

warned of increased violence in the days ahead of the vote. The election is for a National Assembly that will govern the country and draft a permanent constitution.

On Wednesday, Basilica's troops got a taste of what may be in store for them as election day nears. Insurgents fired mortar rounds at an Iraqi police station where a company of American military police are based in the suburb of Saba Al-Boor, north of Baghdad.

Four shells fell near the station, each one getting progressively closer to the Iraqi police and U.S. soldiers barricaded inside — a targeting technique known as "walking up" the fire. Within minutes, Apache attack helicopters were overhead.

A patrol from E Troop, 101st Cavalry, which was in the town when the mortars fell, sent troops to look for the Iraqi mortar-

men. But as happens in most attacks, the insurgents fled before U.S. troops could find them.

"They fire off a few rounds, jump in a car and drive away," said 2nd Lt. Shaun Joyce, the 33-year-old patrol leader.

In this case, Joyce and other officers were concerned that a sniper in the town was directing the fire, which could be intended to set the stage for a more accurate attack later, perhaps on election day. Two of the mortars fell on brick houses, blasting holes in a wall and a ceiling. One girl was killed and six other civilians were seriously wounded, U.S. medics who treated them said. The wounded were flown to a military hospital by U.S. medical evacuation helicopter.

Soldiers in the field have been given lists of suspect vehicles to stop and search. They also have names of suspected militants, but catching them is enormously difficult in a metropolitan area of more than 8 million people.

Insurgents bomb Iraqi school slated as polling site

By SAMEER N. YACUB

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Eleven Iraqis and one Marine were killed Thursday as insurgents clashed with U.S. troops and blew up a school slated to serve as a polling station — pre-election violence that followed the deadliest day for U.S. troops since the war's start. Another U.S. soldier died in an accident.

The Marine was killed and five others were injured when insurgents launched mortars at their base near Iskandariyah, about 30 miles south of Baghdad.

In the capital, U.S. and Iraqi troops clashed with insurgents on Haifa street in the center of the city, witnesses reported.

The attacks came on the deadliest day for U.S. forces since the Iraq war began nearly two years ago: 30 Marines and a Navy sailor died when a helicopter crashed in bad weather in the western desert Wednesday, and six other U.S. troops were killed in insurgent ambushes [see related stories on page 4].

Attacks have increased ahead of Sunday's national elections, when Iraqis will choose a 275-member legislature and provincial councils across the country in the first balloting since the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein. Sunni Muslim militants have



An Iraqi school keeper removes school records from the rubble after an explosion Thursday in Baghdad. Eleven Iraqis and one Marine were killed in election violence Thursday as insurgents clashed with U.S. troops and blew up a school slated to serve as a polling center.

vowed to undermine the elections, fearing victory at the polls by the Shiite Muslim majority.

Three Iraqi civilians were killed Thursday in a house in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, when a car bomb exploded nearby, said Alaadin Mohammed, a doctor at the local hospital.

Hours later, mortar shells fell on a designated polling station in Samarra, police said.

Also in Samarra, armed men blew up a school administration building after first ordering the staff to leave, said police Lt. Qasim Mohammed. The destroyed building had been scheduled to be a voting center Sunday.

Sporadic clashes also erupted in Samarra between U.S. troops and armed men, killing one Iraqi civilian and injuring another, Mohammed said.

In Kirkuk, insurgents attacked

seven polling stations with mortars and machine guns and opened fire on a police patrol, killing one policeman, authorities said.

A suicide car bomber struck a U.S. military convoy near the northern city of Beiji, witnesses said. There were no reports of casualties.

Another three Iraqis were killed and seven injured when a roadside bomb missed a U.S. convoy in Mahomuya, 20 miles south of Baghdad, according to the area's hospital director, Dawoud al-Taie.

Near Tikrit, a roadside bomb killed one Iraqi bystander and narrowly missed another passing U.S. military convoy, police said.

The attack happened on a road near Saddam's hometown, about 80 miles north of Baghdad, said police Lt. Shalan Allawi.

And in Ramadi, another Iraqi National Guard soldier was killed when insurgents attacked a joint U.S.-Iraqi force guarding a voting center at a school, said police Lt. Said al-Obaidi.

The body of Talib Minshid, a colonel in the former Iraqi intelligence under Saddam, was found in Baguqa, according to a hospital official, Mohammed Ali. Minshid had been abducted by armed men two days ago.

A U.S. soldier died Thursday of a gunshot wound on a base near Tikrit in what the American military command called an accident.

Arab media prepares for Iraq election

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — As Iraqis prepare for their national elections, Arab media outlets are providing some of the most intense coverage in recent memory, particularly as many speculate what will be the outcome will have throughout the region.

Arab TV airtime and newspaper pages have been filled in the run-up to Sunday's vote with interviews of candidate in elections for a 275-member National Assembly, plus opinions by hordes of commentators.

Many deem the U.S.-backed polls illegitimate; others see them as the only way out for Iraqis from the spiraling violence and bloodshed.

"Some of the media outlets are being passionate instead of professional in their obvious opposition to the elections taking place by taking a political stand instead of doing their duty as journalists," Al-Azarya TV chief Abdulrahman al-Rashed said Wednesday.

His station, like other Arab media, has been providing election-day coverage throughout Iraq, including reports from the battleground cities of Fallujah and Mosul and interviews with numerous candidates.

A big exception, however, is Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV, the Arab world's first independent network, which was ejected from Iraq last year after U.S. and Iraqi authorities accused it of inciting violence.

Al-Jazeera chief editor Ahmed al-Sheikh said that despite his station's ouster from Iraq, it still will provide neutral coverage that includes interviews with Iraqis voting outside the country and analysts responding to the trends and result. Al-Sheikh said he believes the polls should be delayed to ensure greater participation from Sunni Arab Muslims.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,416 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,680 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is 39 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Wednesday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 20; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two

each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,278 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 971 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military: ■ A soldier died Wednesday from an explosive in Baghdad.

■ Thirty Marines and one sailor died Wednesday when their helicopter crashed near Rutbah, Iraq while conducting security operations.

■ One soldier was killed Wednesday when a patrol was attacked with grenades near Dulayyah, Iraq.

■ Four Marines were killed Wednesday in Iraq's Anbar province.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department and family members:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Tony Hernandez, 31, Canyon Lake, Texas, died Wednesday when his helicopter crashed near Rutbah, Iraq, assigned to the 1st Marine Division, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Camp Pendleton, Calif. ■ Army Sgt. Brett D. Swank, 21, Northumberland, Pa., died Monday in Baghdad, Iraq, of injuries from an explosive; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, Fort Polk, La.

Nation mourns troops killed on deadliest day

27 Hawaii-based Marines died in Iraq helo crash

By B.J. REYES

The Associated Press

KAILUA, Hawaii — A sudden and painful reminder of the war in Iraq hit this state with word that 27 Marines from one base had been killed in the worst loss of Hawaii-based troops since Pearl Harbor.

All but three of the 30 Marines and one sailor killed when a helicopter crashed Wednesday in a desert sandstorm had been deployed from the Marine Corps base at Kaneohe Bay, according to Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii.

"We are particularly feeling the effects of the war in Hawaii," Akaka said in a statement from his Washington office.

"My heartfelt thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathies go to the families of each Marine."

The crash shook the Windward Oahu community near the base as residents awaited the names of the dead. "Your heart just sinks," said Bobbie Jerome, 34, whose Marine husband has not been deployed to Iraq.

The Kaneohe Bay base is under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, near Oceanside, Calif. Some of the victims also were based in San Diego.

While the Marines come from hometowns across America, no single military attack or accident stands out as hitting Hawaii harder since the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor that left 2,390 people dead and 1,178 wounded.

"That's a tragic story for everybody here," Bob Reeve, 71, a retired sailor who lives near the Kaneohe base, said after hearing the news. "We like our military here. It's going to be a sad thing."

The crash dramatically increased the death toll of servicemen with Hawaii ties in Iraq and Afghanistan to 78, including 43 Marines from the Kaneohe base.

In Oceanside, Amber Warlock, 31, a former Marine whose husband is a Marine pilot currently stationed at Camp Pendleton, said she was stunned when she heard about the crash on television.

"You hear about people dying every day in ones and twos," she said. "But 31 is just too much to comprehend."

Warlock sought solace at the beach with her 5-month-old daughter, Heidi, and a fellow Marine wife who cried at news of the deaths, even though she had confirmed her deployed husband was OK.

"You just know what every single woman sitting in her home feels, whether it's going to be yours or someone you know," Warlock said. "It doesn't matter who it is. It's a bad day for everybody."

But in Kailua, Lee Bowman, 25, a Navy medic who served in Iraq last year, said of the victims: "My heart goes out to them. I feel it's going to be hard to replace them."

Associated Press writers T.A. Badger in Texas and Michelle Morgante in California contributed to this report.



Sgt. David Trammil of Kaneohe, Hawaii, reflects Wednesday on the news that 30 Marines and one sailor were killed in a helicopter crash in Iraq. All but three of the 30 Marines and one sailor killed when the helicopter crashed in a desert sandstorm had been deployed from Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, according to Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii.

Va. loses 4 'brothers'

The Associated Press

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Four Marines from a combat engineering company were killed and four injured during an ambush on the deadliest day in Iraq for U.S. troops.

The four were killed in Iraq's Anbar Province and were among 36 American troops killed in Iraq on Wednesday. Thirty-one were killed in a Marine helicopter crash in the western desert.

Capt. Jamie Wagner of Company C, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, on Thursday identified the dead as: Sgt. Jesse Strong, 24, of Albany, Vt., a student at Liberty University in Lynchburg; Cpl. Jonathan Bowling, 23, of Stuart; Cpl. Christopher Weaver, 24, of Spotsylvania; and Lance Cpl. Karl Linn, 20, of Chesterfield.

"The Marine Corps is truly a band of brothers and we lost four brothers from this company," Wagner said. "But we continue to do our jobs and continue to carry on as Marines."

Company C, part of the 4th Combat Battalion based in Baltimore, was activated in June 2003, Wagner said, and left for Iraq in September 2003. They were to return home in the spring.

A reporter embedded with those troops, Jim Dolan of WABC in New York City, said the four were killed when insurgents ambushed a Marine convoy leaving the town of Haditha, northwest of



Courtesy of Linn of the family/AP

U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Karl Linn of Chesterfield, Va., poses with his rifle at his base in Iraq's Anbar Province. Linn was killed in an ambush on a convoy he was riding on Wednesday near Haditha, Iraq.

Baghdad, hitting a vehicle with a rocket-propelled grenade.

Wagner, senior active duty adviser with Company C, identified the injured as: Cpl. Charles Gentry, Cumberland, Tenn.; Sgt. William Meyers of Mooresville, N.C.; and Lance Cpl. Mark Miller of Bedford. Each was hospitalized with minor injuries, Wagner said. Cpl. Timothy Franklin of Lynchburg was also treated for injuries.

California military town stung by deaths

The Associated Press

OCEANSIDE, Calif. — This seaside military town reeled with grief and resolve Wednesday at the news that 31 servicemen were killed when a transport helicopter crashed in the deadliest single incident yet for U.S. forces in Iraq.

"It's terrible, but it comes with the territory," said Carl Dreibeis, 52, an Oceanside native who served in the Navy and said members of his family have fought in every U.S. war since the American Revolution.

"I'm afraid that when people hear this, their inclinations will be to retreat. But I say charge," Dreibeis said.

Some of the victims were members of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, based at

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego. Further details were withheld pending notification of families.

The crew chief onboard the helicopter, Lance Cpl. Tony Hernandez, deployed to Iraq last summer and was scheduled to return to Camp Pendleton in March, said his father, Leroy Hernandez, of Canyon Lake, Texas.

He said he last spoke with his son on Sunday.

"He said it was cold, that he didn't

like the weather, that he was working his butt off — the usual gripes," Hernandez said. "He didn't say a lot because he didn't want anyone to worry."

Hernandez said his son tried to join the Marines after he graduated from high school but was rejected because he was too heavy. After visiting with a recruiter again, he was soon running hard and dieting to trim nearly 25 pounds off his frame. He had lost another 20 pounds by the time he finished Marine boot camp in California.

"We went to his graduation and we almost didn't recognize him," Hernandez said.

"I knew [the war] was going to escalate — it was pretty much guaranteed," he said. "Unfortunately, it's the young kids who end up paying the price."

By BASSEM MROUE

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi troops need six more months before they can take control of cities and towns, Iraq's army chief said Thursday. Afterward, it would still need help from U.S. and other foreign forces to protect the country's borders.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Gen. Babaker Shawkat Zebari said he was optimistic about prospects for bolster-

ing the capabilities of Iraq's security forces — a key U.S. goal as the White House comes under domestic political pressure to reduce the American military commitment here.

"God willing, during this year, our units will be fully armed, trained and have enough soldiers," Zebari, an ethnic Kurd, said.

"After all this is finished, I am very optimistic that the Iraqi army will be able to protect the territories and border."

Zebari said that if Iraqi forces continue to improve, "we will be able to protect Iraqi cities and villages within six months."

Pentagon officials hope to accelerate the training of Iraqi security forces after the Sunday national elections so that they can assume the main role in fighting the insurgency. That would enable Washington to begin bringing home the 15,000 U.S. troops.

In remarks prepared for delivery at Johns Hopkins University,

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy said the U.S. military presence in Iraq "has become part of the problem, not part of the solution" and that the United States needs to work with the Iraqis "on a specific timetable for the honorable homecoming of our forces."

On Wednesday, however, the top U.S. commander here, Gen. George Casey, said Iraqi forces were not ready to take over the fight against the insurgents and there was no guarantee they would ever be able to do so.

But Zebari said he was hopeful that over the next six months, the insurgents could be weakened militarily as Iraqi forces grow in confidence and capability.

Nevertheless, Iraq would still need U.S. help even after Iraqi troops and police assume the main responsibility for protecting Baghdad and other major cities.

"The Iraqi army should benefit from presence of coalition or multinational bases to protect from any border violation by any country," Zebari said.

General: Iraq troops should be ready in 6 months

U.S. troops fortify polling stations in Iraq

BY JOSEPH GORDONO

Stars and Stripes

RAMADI, Iraq — American combat engineers and infantrymen occupied dozens of polling stations throughout Iraq early Thursday morning so they could fortify them with concrete barriers, search for bombs and prepare them for possible insurgent attacks in the run up to Sunday's elections.

In Ramadi, where insurgents and American troops have clashed on a near daily basis, members of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment and the 44th Engineers Battalion — both of which deployed with 2nd Infantry Division units from South Korea to Iraq last fall — took several locations throughout the city.

Working under cover of darkness, huge tracked-recovery vehicles moved concrete barriers into blocking positions, while engineers and soldiers laid out several layers of concertina wire.

"We are going to harden the outer perimeters and provide a secure place for the residents of Ramadi to vote," said 1-503 commander Lt. Col. Justin Gubler, earlier in the day.

At one polling station, a relatively new train station in Ramadi, soldiers arrived around 1 a.m. to begin transforming the largely abandoned facility into a protected area.

Squads of soldiers swept the buildings for bombs and weapons while other teams set up security measures outside. By around 5 a.m., most of the work was done, and some of the soldiers grabbed a few hours of sleep.

"We got done a little earlier than we thought, so the guys will be able to get



U.S. troops occupied polling sites throughout Ramadi early Thursday morning, hardening defenses against possible attacks ahead of Sunday's elections.

a little rest," said Capt. Marco Ferrara of Company D, which will guard the polling station until election day.

By morning, members of an Iraqi Special Police Commando had joined the unit. Under agreements with the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, only local forces will be inside the actual polling stations during the election.

All told, more than 100,00 Iraqi soldiers and 150,000 U.S. troops will help provide security throughout the country on election day. In other Iraqi cities, insurgents have attacked or destroyed polling stations.

Ramadi was no exception.

By morning, insurgents had located the troops. U.S. and Iraqi officials did

not plan to announce the locations of polling places until around 48 hours before the vote. But as day broke Thursday and the soldiers finished up with the security measures, the crisp snap of a few incoming bullets whizzed overhead. In the distance, gunfire and explosions could briefly be heard coming from other quarters of the city.

By mid-afternoon, the soldiers at the polling station were receiving mortar and rocket-propelled grenade fire. They fired back with machine guns and grenade rounds from their own.

U.S. and Iraqi patrols, using the polling stations as new temporary staging locations, then went into Ramadi to conduct patrols.

E-mail Joseph Gordonono at: gordonono@spstrs.osd.mil



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Spc. Charles Franklin, 21, from Montgomery, Ala., pulls security during patrols of the area around newly established polling stations in Ramadi, Iraq. Franklin is with the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment.

Soldiers spoil kidnapping in Baghdad

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

BAGHDAD — Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment's scout platoon foiled a kidnapping attempt of eight Iraqis in Baghdad's Kadimiya district Wednesday.

A Ministry of Oil administrator and a few sheiks were among those rescued. Five kidnappers were taken into custody.

The soldiers were patrolling Wednesday night when platoon leader 1st Lt. Jeff O'Dell decided to set up a traffic checkpoint — called a TCP by the soldiers — off a main road.

The 10th Mountain Division soldiers had searched a handful of cars when a van came around the corner into the checkpoint relatively fast, said platoon member Spc. Joshua Edwards.

"He took the corner doing about 30 — that was odd," he said. "He came to a dead stop and started to back up at the same speed."

The soldiers forced the vehicle to stop by aiming their weapons at it, then went up to the vehicle.

Soldiers noticed people bound and blindfolded in the back. The

drivers explained by saying they were government security forces and those in back were their prisoners.

When Staff Sgt. Steven Johnson got to the van and started speaking to the driver and passenger, one of the captives spoke up.

"When one of the sheiks heard my voice, he started calling for help," he said.

The soldiers separated the kidnappers from the others, eventually escorting all of them back to their base camp. A search of the

five kidnappers and vehicle uncovered four pistols, an AK-47 assault rifle and a sub-machine gun fitted with a silencer, according to a military press release.

Sgt. Carl McCauley said that the soldiers were surprised at the night's events. "At first, I was like 'holy [expletive]," he said. "I looked around and thought 'What the hell just happened?'"

"We've run hundreds of TCPs," Edwards said. "We've found stuff, but nothing that's a big deal. We got lucky."

E-mail Jason Chudy at: chudyj@mil.estrps.osd.mil

Kennedy: Set timeline

WASHINGTON — The American military's continued presence in Iraq is fanning the flames of conflict, and signals the need for a new detailed timeline to bring the troops home, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy said Thursday.

Just three days before the Iraqi people go to the polls to elect a new government, the Massachusetts Democrat said America must give Iraq back to its people rather than continue an occupation that parallels the failed politics of the Vietnam war.

While not the first member of Congress to call for a withdrawal of the troops, Kennedy is the first senator to do so.

Guilty plea expected

NEWARK, N.J. — Sgt. Javal S. Davis, who was charged with conspiracy to maltreat detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison, dereliction of duty for failing to protect detainees from abuse, and maltreatment of detainees, will plead guilty to reduced charges next week as part of a deal with military prosecutors, his lawyer said Thursday.

Those charges will be dismissed, and Davis — who is not seen on any of the notorious photos from the prison — will plead guilty to simple assault and rendering false official statements, his civilian attorney, Paul Bergin, said Thursday.

From wire reports

U.S. Embassy in Kuwait warns of surveillance

The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — The U.S. Embassy warned Americans in Kuwait on Thursday to be cautious, saying terrorists have been conducting surveillance of at least one building where Westerners live.

It was the fourth security-related message from the embassy this month.

The embassy warning message pointed to two shootouts this month between Kuwaiti police and suspected militants where two suspects and two policemen were killed.

The embassy message said it has "information that the group behind the recent shoot-

ings did not distinguish between official and civilian targets and that they conducted surveillance of at least one facility known to house a large number of Western civilians." The embassy identified the buildings as the Alia and Ghaliya towers in Fintas, south of Kuwait City. Additional security measures have been put in place at the location, the warning message said.

"Heightened security awareness should be exercised in all residential complexes, as terrorists have specifically targeted a variety of Western housing facilities in the past," it said. About two years ago, a young Kuwaiti was arrested with homemade explosives near the towers in Fintas. He had not used them.

The embassy asked Americans to maintain a low profile, avoid areas where Westerners are known to congregate and report any suspicious activity to police. Some 13,000 Americans are registered with the embassy. Many work in the oil sector and in education.

Authorities have arrested more than 25 Kuwaiti and Saudi suspects since the Jan. 10 and 15 clashes. Seven of them, including a woman, have been referred to the prosecution for planning terrorist attacks or failing to report such plans to the police.

Police have found large caches of weapons and explosives around the country this month.

Rumsfeld dismisses report about troop levels in Iraq

BY PATRICK DICKSON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Wednesday dismissed a media report that said the Army would not reduce troop numbers in Iraq at least through 2006.

Speaking after a House Armed Services Committee meeting, Rumsfeld said it would be "a misunderstanding to characterize" statements made by Army Lt. Gen. James Loveless to mean the service had firm plans to keep the force at present levels.

The Washington Post reported, and Stars and Stripes subsequently printed, a story that said

the Army expected to keep its troop strength in Iraq at about 120,000 soldiers for at least two more years.

The Post quoted Loveless as saying, "We're making the assumption that the level of effort is going to continue."

But asked if he agreed with the assessment, Rumsfeld said it was routine planning for multiple scenarios.

"It certainly was not an assess-

ment of any kind, and he said that very explicitly, if I'm not mistaken," Rumsfeld said.

"He said that the Army has to plan, it has to look forward, and it looks forward one, two, three years. And what they do is develop an assumption."

"And so they said for the sake of argument, assume you kept the same level of forces there over that period, how would we meet that?"

"Then they do various sensitivities, they say what if it's more, what if it's less? Then they say, 'How would we deal with that situation?'"

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Rumsfeld



JOSEPH GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. 1st Class Jefferson Fridgen, working with 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, hands out election information to an Iraqi shopkeeper in the Tamin district near Ramadi, Iraq. On Wednesday, a United Nations official criticized U.S. troops for distributing election fliers.

Afghan soldier opens fire in U.S. base, killing five fellow soldiers

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan soldier opened fire inside a U.S. military base Thursday, killing five of his Afghan comrades before another soldier gunned him down to end a bloodbath that a commander attributed to mental problems.

Elsewhere in the troubled south, police killed a suspected Taliban commander and captured his deputy in a shootout.

The U.S. military said the soldier attacked fellow Afghan National Army troops early Thursday morning in Helmand province.

Another six Afghan soldiers were wounded.

"The soldier who initiated the shooting was returning from guard duty at the time of the incident and, currently, no information is available as to his motives," a statement issued by the U.S. military said.

It said there was "no evidence" the attack was the work of militants.

The injured were evacuated to the main American base in south-

ern Afghanistan at Kandahar for medical treatment. There was no word on their conditions.

No soldiers from the U.S.-led coalition were wounded in the attack, the statement said. Some 18,000 U.S.-led forces are still hunting al-Qaida and Taliban remnants mainly in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

Gen. Muslim Abed, a senior army commander in Kandahar, said the incident happened in a national army compound within the American base in the town of Girisht, 220 miles southwest of the capital, Kabul.

He said the soldier was from Kabul, but didn't know his name.

The soldier had "mental problems," Abed said, but he didn't elaborate.

"He just entered a room and opened fire," Abed said.

The Defense Ministry said it was investigating.

Coalition forces often operate alongside the U.S.-trained Afghan army, which currently has 18,000 soldiers. It plans to recruit and train 70,000.

The army is meant to replace the private militias of warlords that still hold sway in much of

the country, which is recovering from 25 years of conflict. A U.N.-sponsored disarmament campaign is working to dismantle the militias.

The captured Taliban commander, Mullah Mohammed Ullah, and his deputy Mullah Mohammed Ghafar were cornered as they traveled by motorbike in a village in Musa Qala district of Helmand province on Wednesday, an official said.

They opened fire when police tried to stop and arrest them, sparking a shootout in which Ullah and one policeman were killed and three other officers wounded, said Mohammed Wali, spokesman for the provincial governor.

Ghafar was wounded and taken into Afghan police custody for questioning.

Wali said the two men were Taliban leaders in Musa Qala, and had led an attack on the district chief's office last year that left at least four Afghan soldiers dead.

He said they were also behind a bombing in the district that had killed a U.S. soldier and wounded another some months ago.

Eikenberry to lead Afghanistan command

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A U.S. general who helped rebuild Afghanistan's army has been named as the next commander of American forces in the country, the U.S. military said Thursday.

Army Maj. Gen. Karl Eikenberry would take up his new post "probably within the next two to three months," said Mark McCann, a military spokesman in the Afghan capital, Kabul. His assignment needs confirmation in the U.S. Senate.

President Bush nominated Eikenberry for a third star and assignment as commander in Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of Defense said earlier this week.

Eikenberry, currently director of strategic planning for the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii, is to replace Lt. Gen. David Barno, who took charge of the Afghan operation in November 2003.

Barno's term has seen the 18,000-strong U.S.-led coalition shift its focus from the so-far fruitless search for top fugitives, including al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden and Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, toward operations in support of the new Afghan government.

Eikenberry served from Sept. 2002 to Sept. 2003 as the head of the U.S. military's office for military cooperation, which is charged with establishing the Afghan National Army.

BY COLUM LYNCH

The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations' top elections official, Carina Perelli, on Wednesday sharply criticized U.S. military forces in Iraq for distributing material urging Iraqis to vote in the country's elections Sunday.

Perelli and other U.N. officials are concerned that such U.S. military involvement is compromising efforts to convince Iraqis to vote in the election, she said.

Perelli said she and the top U.N. election official in Iraq, Carlos Valencia, have been "asking, begging military commanders" to stop the distribution of material promoting the elections.

Officials from the U.N.-backed Iraqi Electoral Commission have also asked the United States to stop, she said.

"The U.S. military has been extremely, I would say, overenthusiastic in trying to help out with this election," she told reporters. "And we have been basically saying that they should try to minimize their participation, because this is an Iraqi process."

Informed by a reporter that U.S. soldiers have distributed voting material in recent weeks, Perelli said, "I'm glad that you reported it, because I'm going to be screaming on the phone in two minutes."

A significant voter turnout in Iraq's elections would help bolster the Bush administration's case that the political transition there enjoys widespread public

support.

On Wednesday, President Bush urged Iraqis to "defy these terrorists" seeking to intimidate voters and go to the polls.

He predicted that "millions of Iraqi voters will show their bravery, their love of country and their desire to live in freedom" by casting votes.

Asked to respond to Perelli's comments, Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, said: "We understand that this is an Iraqi election" and "American soldiers do not have the mission to get the vote out."

But a Pentagon spokesman, Lt. Col. Barry Ventable, said: "It is my understanding that U.S. soldiers and other coalition forces patrolling in various places there have been handing out, if you will, some elections education material" produced by the Iraqi Electoral Commission.

Carina Perelli
U.N.'s top election official

“... [W]e have been basically saying that [the U.S. military] should try to minimize their participation, because this is an Iraqi process.”

Kieran Prendergast, the U.N. undersecretary general for political affairs, said that the conditions for the elections "are far from ideal," but that "imperfect elections are the right instrument of Iraq for a democratic transition in Iraq."

Prendergast said that many Iraqis still feel "excluded and alienated" by the country's political transition and that others question the impartiality of the Iraqi Electoral Commission. Still, he said that the new government will have fresh opportunities after the elections to "co-opt sectors of the population" that oppose the political transition.

1-4 Cavalry soldier honored in Schweinfurt

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

When a job needed doing, Sgt. Kyle Childress always stood up and led.

He headed the sniper team for the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, manned the gun on his Bradley fighting vehicle and led the house assault teams more than 150 times during his 11 months in Iraq.

On Jan. 21, Childress' leadership cost him his life. A man opened fire from inside as he led his platoon into a house in Ad Dulayah, Iraq, in search of enemy fighters. He died later at a combat hospital in Balad.

Friends from the 1-4 Cavalry's rear detachment gathered Thursday at an army chapel in Schweinfurt, Germany, to remember a man they described as quiet and tough, a soldier's soldier.

"Anyone in this unit and the men of his platoon would tell you when the going gets tough, it is a blessing to have Kyle around," said Staff Sgt. Bradley Shadden, a 1-4 Cavalry soldier who served with Childress in Iraq until he was wounded. "His bravery was unmatched."



Childress

Childress grew up in Terre Haute, Ind., where he graduated from high school in 1994. Five years later he enlisted in the Army, where he trained as a scout. He served with the 3rd Infantry Division before joining 1-4 Cavalry's Troop A in mid-2002. He deployed to Iraq with the unit last February.

Shadden recalled Childress' arrival at 1-4 Cavalry, where he stood out because he said so little.

"He was one tough nut to crack," Shadden said.

He let few people get close. When he did speak, friends said, he made it count. He might offer a punned joke or a blunt criticism, but he chose his words carefully and didn't sweat the small stuff.

In a tribute read at the service, Childress platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Garcia, told the fallen soldier what he would remember most about him.

"You kept us laughing with your no-nonsense approach to life, and you made us realize that you and your wife had to accomplish something that did not make total sense," Garcia said.

"You would say 'That's [expletive]'. But you still would pack it up and get you and your men ready, no matter what. You always got the job done."

Childress' superiors said he had a gift for soldiering. He could learn any battle skill quickly and well. He led more than 1,000 hours of urban combat operations.



KRISTEN CHANDLER TOTH/Courtesy of U.S. Army

Spec. Jeff Cullison serves as an honor guard, while soldiers line up to pay their last respects to Sgt. Kyle Childress, who was killed last week in Iraq.

"He was capable of doing lots of tasks to a high level of expertise," said Capt. Cory Mack, his troop commander, in remarks read at the service. "On raids he normally served as the No. 1 man — the most dangerous position — in the four-man stack. He did this because he was the best at it."

Childress is survived by his parents,

Keith and Nancy Childress, a brother, Jason, a sister, Gretta, and his German fiancée, Kerstin Beck.

He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

E-mail Steve Liewer at: liewers@mail.estrimes.osd.mil

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GAO report points to Pentagon waste

BY CHRISTOPHER LEE

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government's biggest department is also one of the most prone to waste, fraud and abuse, raising concerns about the effectiveness of many of its programs, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office.

The Department of Defense accounts for eight of the 25 federal programs, functions or offices that appear on the GAO's 2005 "high-risk" list. Two of its functions — inventory management and weapon systems acquisition — have been on the list of problem programs since 1990.

"This is unacceptable and should not be tolerated," Comptroller General David Walker said Tuesday at a news conference. He was joined, in sentiment and at the lectern, by several lawmakers, including Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., George Voinovich, R-Ohio, and Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, and Reps. Tom Davis, R-Va. and Henry Waxman, D-Calif.

Walker noted that the Pentagon also has several other programs that landed on the list, a compilation of the biggest managerial trouble spots across the federal government issued by the GAO every other year. He said the department's failure to turn around many of the problem areas "results in billions of dollars in waste each year and inadequate accountability to the Congress and the American taxpayer."

Areas of concern at Defense include financial and contract management, the personnel security clearance program, management of military bases, and modernization of its computer systems, the report found.

Cheryl Irwin, a department spokeswoman, said Tuesday that officials need time to study the report before commenting. "We are certainly reviewing it. It's a little bit premature at this time for us to have a full response."

New to the high-risk list this year is a government-wide problem of ineffective sharing of information related to homeland security.

The report cited the "slow pace" of information sharing between fingerprint databases at the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department. It also said that inconsistent agency policies and overlapping sets of data would impede efforts to consolidate information from 12 terrorist and criminal watch systems maintained by nine federal agencies. The report's findings "essentially say to us that we haven't achieved the homeland security the law requires us to achieve," said Lieberman, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. "The risk here is to the personal security of the American people at home."

The GAO did say that information sharing has improved since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Congress created Homeland Security to serve, among other things, as a repository for information.

Lawmakers said the report provides a guide for agencies to improve and, in some cases, an indication of where Congress should step in with legislation.

Defense policy undersecretary Feith resigns

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A principal architect of the Defense Department's postwar strategy in Iraq announced Wednesday that he will leave his post this summer.

Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy, said he is leaving for personal reasons, citing the desire to spend more time with his four children. "For the last four years, they haven't seen me a lot," Feith said Wednesday. Feith is a longtime Washington lawyer and part of a group of neo-conservative foreign policy experts known for strong support of

Israel and who had long-held aspirations of unseating Saddam Hussein.

Supporters have praised Feith and the group, which includes former Reagan defense aide Richard L. Perle, for their willingness to take risks to confront autocracy in the Middle East and for their hard-line position against giving up Israeli-held land to the Palestinians.

Detractors have criticized Feith for being unrealistic about the cost and outcome of invading Iraq and have asserted that he played a critical, behind-the-scenes role in exaggerat-



Feith

ing the pre-war threat from Saddam through a secretive office he set up, the Office of Special Plans.

Retired Army Gen. Tommy R. Franks, once commander of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, called him "the stupidest guy on the face of the

Earth" in his recent book. Feith and Franks tangled often, including over a proposal to train 5,000 Iraqi soldiers to be interpreters and guides during the war.

Feith said Wednesday that "controversy about important national security issues is to be expected. That's part of the job." He counted as his greatest achievement his work in devising the Pentagon's overall counterterrorism strategy, including that used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I don't have any definite plans," he said of his post-Pentagon life. "I just have some notions."

IN THE WORLD

Europe gets slammed by big winter storm

BY WILLIAM J. KOLE

The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Winter's full fury arrived late but with a vengeance across much of Europe on Thursday, dumping snow that played havoc with Switzerland's famously efficient trains and gave Rome and the Mediterranean island of Mallorca a rare white blanket.

Heavy snow stranded Ukraine's new president, Viktor Yushchenko, in Poland and forced him to cancel a much-anticipated trip to Brussels, Belgium, for his first address to the European Parliament.

A plane carrying mail from Romania to Hungary crashed in snowy weather near Iasi in northeastern Romania early Thursday, killing the two Hungarian pilots, authorities said. In the city of Sibiu, meanwhile, a pilot aborted a takeoff to Munich because of a snow-clogged runway.

Whipped by high winds, snow blanketed northern and eastern Romania, closing several highways and cutting power to about 14 villages in the country of Harghita.

More than five feet of snow isolated areas of north and east Albania, and the government said it would send in food and army machinery to open blocked roads.

In Austria, authorities closed key highways and truck traffic Thursday after more than 20 big rigs became stuck along with



A man clears the snow from his car windshield in Budapest on Wednesday after heavy snow blanketed most of Europe.

hundreds of cars, some still fitted with summer tires.

In Vienna, about 12 inches of snow fell, the most on Jan. 27 since 1969, the Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics said.

With classes canceled at many schools,

students lugged snowboards up into the Vienna Woods, which were blanketed by snow for the first time since early December.

In Germany, heavy snowfalls added a thick layer of fresh snow to the Upper Bavaria region Tuesday night.

In neighboring Slovakia, heavy snowfall continued Thursday, tying up traffic throughout the country, and in the Czech Republic.

Heavy snow storms isolated 13 villages in southwest Hungary and made numerous roads impassable, state-run news agency MTI reported Thursday.

Rome awoke to a light blanket of snow which settled on car roofs and in parks in the higher parts of the city. The rare snowfall in Italy's capital held up commuter trains coming into the city.

In central France, heavy snow shut down numerous schools as well as a stretch of highway. Nationwide, a cold snap broke the previous record for electricity consumption set in January 2003 as chilly homeowners turned up their thermostats. In Paris, shelters scrambled to make more space for the homeless.

In Switzerland, winds of 107 miles per hour were clocked on the peak of La Dole in the Jura mountains north of Geneva, creating blizzard-like conditions.

Heavy snow blocked roads and isolated hundreds of mountain towns in central and northern Spain. More than 1,000 people were trapped overnight on a major highway in the province of Burgos and were temporary housed in sports complexes, police said.

U.N.: More drugs needed

GENEVA — The number of people on HIV/AIDS drugs in the developing world almost doubled during 2004, but still falls far short of a U.N. target to have 3 million people on treatment by the end of this year, the World Health Organization said.

"Although the level of commitment is encouraging, it must accelerate in 2005," the U.N. health agency said Wednesday.

At least another 2.3 million people need to start treatment if the target is to be reached, WHO said.

New law for unwed mothers

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania — Parliament has amended a 20-year-old law to reduce the punishment unmarried women face for becoming pregnant from two years to six months and for the first time propose sentences for the father.

Zanzibar's 59-member House of Representatives voted 50-1 late Wednesday in favor of the amendments to the 1985 Spinsters, Widow and Female Divorce Protection Act.

Health and Social Welfare Minister Salim Juma Othman told members before they voted on the law that "the government has decided to come up with the new law aimed at upholding women rights."

Police nab escaped inmates

SAO PAULO, Brazil — Police recaptured a life of 202 escaped inmates Thursday, one day after they broke out of a juvenile detention center in Sao Paulo, authorities said.

About 400 policemen combed the streets of Brazil's largest city looking for the remaining 86 inmates who fled late Wednesday from the Vila Maria detention center, said a spokesman for Sao Paulo's public safety secretary.

The inmates escaped after taking guards hostages and forcing them to open a back door, police said. Some jumped over the detention center's wall.

From The Associated Press

BY VANESSA GERA

The Associated Press

BRZEZINKA, Poland — As candles flickered in the snowy, winter gloom, world leaders and Auschwitz survivors Thursday remembered victims of the Holocaust on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp.

The ceremony, which opened with the recorded rumble of an approaching train, was held on the spot where new arrivals were brought in by rail to the vast camp and put through "selection" — meaning those few who were deemed able to work were separated from the rest, who were taken immediately to the gas chambers.

"It seems if you listen hard enough, you can still hear the outcry of horror of the murdered people," Israeli President Moshe Katsav said.

Joining in the commemorative were Vice President Dick Cheney, and presidents Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland, Vladimir Putin of Russia, and Jacques Chirac of France. German President Horst Koehler sat on the platform without speaking in recognition of his country's responsibility for the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews died during World War II.

Barbed wire and brick barracks

stretched as far as the eye could see. The ruined crematoriums loomed nearby, all covered with a layer of fresh snow.

But Scouts brought blankets to elderly survivors sitting in the freezing cold.

"For a former inmate of Auschwitz, it is an unimaginable and overwhelming emotion to be able to speak in this cemetery without graves, the largest one in the history of Europe," said Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, a survivor who later became Poland's foreign minister.

Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz and the neighboring camp at Birkenau, or Brzezinka in Polish, on Jan. 27, 1945. Some 1.5 million people, most of them Jews, had died at the two camps from gassing, starvation, exhaustion, beatings and disease.

Other victims included Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, Gypsies, homosexuals and political opponents of the Nazis.

"We think of the suffering of our brothers, of the special ties that link us, Poles, with the Jewish nation," Kwasniewski said. Putin compared the Nazis with the terrorists of today.

"Today we shall not only remember the past but also be aware of all the threats of the modern world," he said. "Terrorism is among them, and it is no less dangerous and cunning than fascism."

World leaders remember Auschwitz



Mel Mermelstein, a death camp survivor, lights a candle at Auschwitz, where leaders from 30 countries gathered Thursday to remember victims of the Holocaust on the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation.

Death toll in Thailand boat accident hits 14

The Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand — Rescue workers found the bodies of two Americans and several other people Thursday, bringing the death toll to 14 from the capsizing this week of a tourist boat that overturned on its way back from a beach party in southern Thailand.

Also found were the bodies of an Australian, a Briton, a Swiss citizen and a Thai, officials said.

The search continued for an Australian

man who was still missing in the Gulf of Thailand offshore the island of Koh Samui following Tuesday's accident, said police Lt. Col. Korjari Sangamantorn, who was leading the rescue operation.

The speedboat passengers were returning to their hotels from a full-moon party on Pha-Ngan island when it capsized in the dark at 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday, about 3 miles from Koh Samui's pier.

Authorities still weren't sure how many were aboard the boat when it sank. But the 30-foot boat was thought to be carrying up

to 50 people — more than the 30 it was designed to hold. The skipper, Samran Rungruen, fled the scene as rescue workers saved many of the passengers, nine of whom were injured.

Samran surrendered to police on Wednesday, blaming a mechanical failure for the accident. But authorities said an investigation would be conducted.

The 14 dead whose bodies have been recovered include five Thais, four Britons, three Americans, a Swiss and an Australian, police said.

IN THE STATES

Calif. gay pair's case key

SANTA ANA, Calif. — They filed their lawsuit almost as an afterthought. But a legal challenge by a gay couple from suburban Orange County against laws banning same-sex marriage has suddenly become key in the thin field of litigation on the issue.

Christopher Hammer and Arthur Smelt plan to be in U.S. District Court on Thursday, as their attorney argues that the federal law, as well as California's Proposition 22, are violations of civil liberties.

California recognizes only marriages between a man and a woman, and the Defense of Marriage Act allows states to disregard gay marriages performed in other states and foreign countries.

"Certainly, eyes are going to be focused on this particular case," said Matthew Staver, president of Liberty Counsel, an opponent of gay marriage involved in some 30 cases nationwide.

Hammer and Smelt, both 45, met in 1996 and held a commitment ceremony a year later. They tried to get a marriage license in Orange County at the time but were turned down.

Ohio worker kills boss

TOLEDO, Ohio — An auto worker wired a shotgun to his body and burst into a Jeep assembly plant, killing a supervisor and wounding two other employees before killing himself.

The alleged gunman, Myles Meyers, had met with plant officials to talk about a problem with his work the day before his fatal spree Wednesday at a Jeep Liberty Plant, authorities said.

After entering the plant at about 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Meyers had pointed the gun at a woman in the plant's body shop office and ordered her to summon three other people, police Chief Mike Navarre said.

She summoned one of the three men, Michael Toney, who was shot and wounded. Supervisor Roy Thacker, who was on the list of three, was killed after he went to the office on his own, while a third man who was not on the list, Paul Medlen, was wounded later, authorities said.

Meanwhile, the woman then ran out of the office and warned co-workers over the radio, police said.

Stored chemicals ablaze

GRANDVIEW, Wash. — Officials evacuated 100 homes and closed a 13-mile stretch of highway after a building used to store farm chemicals caught fire, filling the air with contaminated smoke.

A half dozen people complained of skin irritation or respiratory distress and sought treatment at a nearby hospital, said Lt. Jim Keightley, State Patrol spokesman. Authorities evacuated a half-mile area around the Wilco-Ellis Co. plant, he said.

"The chemicals are an irritant and some of them are toxic," according to Ken Cowdrey, Wilco-Ellis' head of safety, said Lt. Jim. However, he said they did not include explosive chlorine, ammonium nitrate or anhydrous ammonia.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

From The Associated Press

Oil co. to cut refinery emissions

Suit settlement also requires ConocoPhillips to pay \$4.5M fine

BY MARK SHERMAN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — ConocoPhillips will install \$525 million in pollution controls at nine refineries and pay a \$4.5 million fine to settle a federal lawsuit alleging Clean Air Act violations, the Bush administration announced Thursday.

The settlement requires ConocoPhillips, the nation's third-big-

gest oil company, to reduce yearly emissions of nitrogen oxide by more than 10,000 tons and sulfur dioxide by more than 37,100 tons. Both can cause respiratory ailments and worsen cases of childhood asthma.

The refineries covered in the agreement among the company, the Justice Department, Environmental Protection Agency and five states, represent 10 percent of the nation's refining capacity.

The refineries are in Califor-

nia, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. California and Washington are not part of the settlement, Justice Department officials said.

The settlement is the 13th reached under an EPA initiative begun in 2000. EPA officials have said the earlier agreements have cut air pollution by 200,000 tons a year at 48 refineries.

The money for pollution control will be spent over eight years

and is just shy of the largest settlement reached over the past four years, a \$550 million agreement with Motiva Enterprises.

In addition to the pollution controls and civil penalty, ConocoPhillips will spend another \$10 million to further reduce emissions at its refineries in the five states that are part of the settlement. The agreement was filed in U.S. District Court in Texas and still requires the approval of a federal judge.

As snow falls in Boston, record follows suit



When the Boston area saw 5 more inches of snow Thursday morning — two days after John McDonald's attempts to clear ice from a friend's car, in Hull, Mass., with a rubber hammer, above — this month became Boston's snowiest on record, Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney asked President Bush to declare a federal emergency in the eastern half of the state Thursday, only days after Bostonians saw a blizzard dump more than 3 feet of snow. Logan Airport's January total is 43.1 inches of snow, more than in any month since the National Weather Service began keeping records for the city in 1892.

Medical-records upgrades sought

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — President Bush said Thursday that the medical industry is behind the times, using paper and pen for many records and prescriptions when computerized records could reduce cost and errors.

"Most industries in America have used information technology to make their businesses more cost effective, more efficient and more productive. And the truth of the matter is, health care hasn't," Bush said during a forum at the Cleveland Clinic.

The White House announced that it will propose that the federal government spend \$125 million in next year's budget to test computerization of health records. The government is spending \$50 million on this in the current budget year, and Bush is also asking Congress to double that amount for 2005.

The Cleveland Clinic has been helping the government develop standards for computer-

ization and Bush heard from doctors who joined him on stage to praise the technology. The hospital uses the Internet to give patients second opinions online for cancer, heart disease and other conditions and also provides health information aimed at eliminating the time and expense of hospital visits.

But for every hospital making advancements like the Cleveland Clinic, there are many that still use the old-fashioned paper methods.

Bush campaigned on the issue last year. He said his goal is for a majority of Americans to have computerized records in 10 years.

Bush said he is sensitive to privacy concerns. "I presume I'm like most Americans. I think my medical records to be private. I don't want people looking at them. I don't want people, you know, opening them up unless I say it's fine for you to do so," he said.

Calif. man charged in rail deaths

BY PAUL CHAVEZ

The Associated Press

GLENDALE, Calif. — The suicidal man who authorities say caused the chain-reaction train derailment that killed 11 people has been charged with multiple counts of murder and could face the death penalty, the district attorney said Thursday.

Juan Manuel Alvarez, 25, left his sport utility vehicle on a railroad track Wednesday after changing his mind about committing suicide, authorities said. He was held without bail at a hospital's jail ward after apparently slicing his own wrists and stabbing himself in the chest.

In addition to the 11 dead, a woman remained missing and nearly 200 people were injured.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Steve Cooley said prosecutors filed charges late Wednesday for 10 counts of murder with "special circumstances" of committing murder through a train derailment. Under state law, the allegation makes Alvarez eligible for the death penalty. Cooley said the complaint would be amended to add another count to refer to the 11th victim, found in the wreckage late Wednesday night.

Prosecutors were evaluating Alvarez's mental state in regard to the special circumstance allegations, but Cooley said it was no defense to the charges.

"This despondency doesn't move me," the district attorney said. "The mere fact that he was a little upset or despondent doesn't mean he has a defense to any charge."

Alvarez's state of mind, while not providing a motive, could show his intent to commit a crime, Cooley said.

Arraignment was planned for Thursday afternoon but could be delayed depending on Alvarez's medical condition.

Alvarez got out of his green Jeep Cherokee before two commuter trains crashed in this Los Angeles suburb. He stood by as the gruesome chain-reaction wreck scattered wreckage and bodies over a quarter-mile of track. The crash was the worst U.S. rail tragedy since 1999.

Alvarez's estranged wife, Carmelita Alvarez, had ordered him out of her Compton home months ago, her family said. In December, she obtained a temporary restraining order keeping him away from her, their 3-year-old son and other family members.

The wounded Alvarez was under suicide watch but was listed in stable condition, and Sheriff Lee Baca said Thursday on CBS' "The Early Show" that Alvarez "was rather astounded himself as to what the cause was."

Associated Press writers Robert Jablon and Laura Wides contributed to this report.

OPINION

How far are we willing to push prisoners?

The Dallas Morning News

"I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom I provide, then questions the manner in which I provide it!"

—Col. Nathan Jessep, "A Few Good Men"

The famous courtroom outburst from Jack Nicholson in the film "A Few Good Men" is a classic defense of "ends-justify-the-means" morality. The fictional Jessep, on military trial for complicity in a soldier's beating death, argues that the society that counts on the security he provides had better take care in judging him.

We were thinking about Col. Jessep in the wake of the conviction of Spc. Charles Graner, recently found guilty of abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison and sentenced to 10 years behind bars. The verdict was just, the punishment condign, and, thus, many of us may think this puts the question of U.S. abuse and torture of detainees to rest.

Wrong. We have no right to scapegoat Spc. Graner. There are far too many questions left unanswered about U.S. policy on physical abuse of these prisoners. There are reams of documents—official investigations, a Red Cross report, internal government papers made public thanks to an

American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit—showing that cruel and inhumane treatment of prisoners was more widespread than initially believed.

We know now that some detainees were beaten, some were raped, some burned, choked, urinated on, forced to face mock execution, shocked with electricity, sexually humiliated... the list goes on.

We know, too, that the White House adopted what might charitably be called an expansive view of the limits of physical coercion. President Bush has said that he does not condone torture, but much depends on the definition of the word. When does necessary roughness become torture—and do our interrogators know and respect the distinction? More important: Does it matter to the American people that they do?

If not, then Col. Jessep is right, and there is no moral limit to what might be done to human beings in the name of security. So much for the sanctity of moral values.

In the film, Nathan Jessep goes down, because our sense of justice does not grant the right to do lawless evil so that good might come of it. If that's what Americans really believe, and not just Hollywood make-believe, we are shamefully reticent to show our troubled consciences.



Comment compromised if conflicts not of interest

BY EDWARD WASSERMAN

The affair of Armstrong Williams, the columnist and TV commentator who secretly took \$240,000 to shield for Bush administration education policy, came and went with blinding speed.

Not only was the furor British and short, but it focused on the case's most unusual elements—that it involved a black conservative, an explicit payout, public money and straight-up propaganda. As The New York Times framed the issue: "The disclosure of the payments intensified a debate over the prevalence of political opinion masked as editorial content in the paid public communications of the Bush administration."

That's one way of looking at it. The far bigger issue, and one reason why the matter got so little attention, is that Williams' sin exemplifies a corruption that is all but routine in the arena of opinion and commentary: Somebody's bankrolling all these supposedly independent voices, and we rarely know who. Of the numerous articles I read on the case only a column by Chris Baker, in The Washington Times, hinted at the problem: "One of the dirty secrets of television news is that the producers who book pundits such as Armstrong Williams on their programs rarely ask the commentators about potential conflicts of interest."

I suspect it's a lot worse than that, and it isn't just TV.

At times, the commentary arena is little better than an ethical brothel.

Reporters face mounting demands to come clean on entanglements, but TV's shouting heads and the outside columnists who fill newspaper op-ed pages face no such clamor.

Freelance a travel article to a reputable newspaper, as a veteran political consultant told me, and you must swear you didn't get as much as a free Coke from the hotels you mention. But write a fierce opinion piece about some public policy—with vast consequences at stake—and no-body asks whether you have a client involved.

As readers, we don't notice. We read the op-ed column or watch the guest commentator, and we're reassured to learn the pundit is an expert in arms control or health-care policy, or an ex-deputy assistant undersecretary, or a scholar-in-residence at some institute, or co-author of some largely unsold book. And it's true, but it tells us nothing. We still have not a clue as to whom this person works for—and whether those learned observations were delivered pursuant to an arrangement with an undisclosed paymaster.

Even formal affiliations may be just protective cover. The writer who's a "fellow" of that high-sounding think tank may be financially beholden to a benefactor hidden behind the institutional curtain.

After the Williams affair broke, Judith Phair, head of the Public Relations Society of America, wrote on the organization's Web site that its Code of Ethics requires professionals to "fully disclose sponsors or financial interests involved in any paid communications activities."

It's a commendable standard—whether labeled corporate PR, lobbying or grass-roots—but routinely obligate consultants to make sure that sympathetic commentaries are placed on respectable media outlets. (It's not unheard-of for the writing to be arranged anonymously well before the prestigious author's byline is rented.) This is never disclosed.

Some say that the rules are different for pundits. Williams—who has insisted he said nothing he didn't believe—claimed initially that because he was a commentator, not a journalist, he could keep the payments secret. In an inter-

view, President Bush, whose appointees were Williams' bagmen, observed, "There needs to be a clear distinction between journalism and advocacy"—a puzzling remark. Did he mean money paid under-the-table to commentators precisely because the public thinks they're independent isn't deceitful? Or course it is.

There is such a thing as principled advocacy. And there is honest commentary based on disinterested judgments and driven by conviction, not cash. What the Williams affair dramatizes is a regrettable institutional laxness from which the marketplace of opinion now suffers.

It's not hard to insist that pundits disclose conflicts and commitments, to insist that bylined authors actually do their own writing and that basic standards of honest discourse apply.

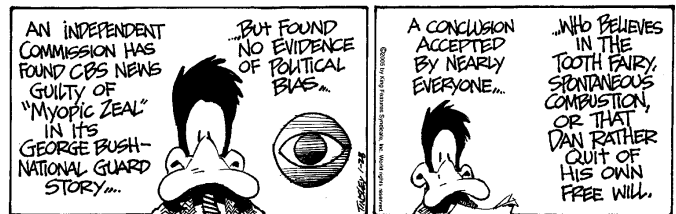
And the beleaguered mainstream media would do well to set such standards now. Because with the jubilant proliferation of punditry on the Internet, it's hard to see where else such standards would be set.

Edward Wasserman is Knight professor of journalism ethics at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va. He wrote this column for The Miami Herald.

What the Williams affair dramatizes is a regrettable institutional laxness from which the marketplace of opinion now suffers.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Rap label founder hit with federal charges

BY MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — In an industry built on tough talk, the hip-hop label Murder Inc. made hundreds of millions of dollars as it blurred the line between the studio and the street.

Founder Irv "Gotti" Lorenzo named his company after a crime syndicate. He borrowed his nickname from a Mafia don. And the impresario behind platinum-selling superstars Ja Rule and Ashanti made no secret of his friendship with one of New York's most notorious drug lords.

Prosecutors charged Wednesday that the criminal image was all too real. In a turn of events unprecedented even in the criminal-minded rap world, Gotti was led from the FBI's Manhattan office in handcuffs as he was charged with laundering more than \$1 million with Kenneth Mc-

Griff's multistate crack and heroin operation.

"They don't call it gangster rap for nothing," said Frederick Snellings, special agent-in-charge of the FBI's New York criminal division.

McGriff, already in prison on a gun violation, was charged with drug dealing, racketeering and three murders.

Federal prosecutors said Gotti, his brother and business partner, Chris Lorenzo, and their associates accepted frequent deliveries of McGriff's drug cash at their Manhattan offices. In exchange, Gotti cut McGriff more than \$280,000 in business and personal checks and paid for tens of thousands of dollars worth of his travel and hotel costs, prosecutors charge.

Recording in a studio dubbed "The Crackhouse," Murder Inc. — now called The Inc. — has sold about 20 million records behind

Ja Rule and Ashanti, who were not charged in the indictment. Ja Rule's current album, "R.U.L.E.," peaked at No. 7 on the Billboard chart. Ashanti currently appears in the movie "Coach Carter."

The company, owned partly by Def Jam, a subsidiary of Universal Music, has made about \$200 million since it was founded in 1997, according to a source familiar with its operations who insisted on anonymity.

Ja Rule's manager and at least seven other Gotti and McGriff associates also have been charged in the case.

Gotti and his brother were released on \$1 million bonds Wednesday afternoon after pleading not guilty in federal court in Brooklyn. The indictment seeks to seize Gotti's personal property and two of his music companies but does not target Murder Inc. itself.

Associated Press writer Tom Hays contributed to this report.



Irv "Gotti" Lorenzo, head of Murder Inc., left, is escorted by police from the FBI office in New York on Wednesday. Lorenzo and his brother Christopher surrendered to the FBI on money-laundering charges. Murder Inc. was renamed The Inc. last year in an attempt to deflect negative publicity from the federal investigation.



AP photos

Above: Michael Howden appears before his sex change. Michael married a woman before undergoing a sex change which transformed them into a same-sex couple, despite a ban on such unions in 40 states, including New Hampshire.

Right: Judi, left, and Mikayla Howden pose at their home in Concord, N.H. The two married nearly four years ago.



Sex change blurs marital status

BY ERIK STETSON
The Associated Press

CONCORD, New Hampshire — Judi Howden went into her marriage knowing full well that one day her husband might become her wife.

The couple stayed together — even as Howden's husband, Michael, underwent a sex-change operation that transformed him into Mikayla. That surgery also landed them in a murky area where gender and law collide.

Their marriage — once between a man and a woman — is now between a woman and a woman, despite a ban on such unions in 40 states, including New Hampshire.

Their experience highlights a legal Catch-22. While states can

either recognize or refuse to recognize someone's new gender following a sex change, either decision inescapably permits some form of same-sex marriage.

"I have no answer to it," said state congressman Dan Ise, a Republican who supports the state's same-sex marriage ban. "We have ventured where angels fear to tread."

The federal government must decide if Mikayla Howden, a U.S. citizen born overseas, can update her birth certificate. It hasn't yet ruled, and Shannon Minter, of the National Center for Lesbian Rights in California, said the Bush administration has not been at accommodating as earlier administrations.

According to the center, four states don't permit gender op-

dates: Tennessee, Ohio, Kansas and Texas. About half of the remaining states do. A firm policy hasn't been legally well established in the remaining states, including New Hampshire, said Minter, the center's legal director.

"Whether or not society will acknowledge our marriage, I think, is my biggest fear," Judi Howden said. "That someday, someone may pass legislation that says, 'Because you are now two females, you are no longer married.' For anyone to say that they have the right to break up a family, I don't think is right."

The Howdens' marriage clearly was legal when it began, and same-sex marriage bans cannot automatically invalidate it, Minter said, just as states don't automatically annul marriages for adultery or abuse.

The Associated Press

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — President Bush's responses to the terrorist attacks colored everything Democratic challenger John Kerry proposed in his unsuccessful bid for the White House last year, the manager of the Kerry campaign said.

"This was an election that was completely overshadowed by 9/11, and every issue that rose was seen by the voters and the candidates through that prism," Mary Beth Cahill said Wednesday at a forum at the Bush Presidential Library at Texas A&M University.

"At the moment when our nation was under attack, President Bush rose completely to the occasion and established a relationship that was backdrop for the entire presidential campaign in 2004. I think for John Kerry and for the Democratic Party, this was a very costly and a very strong competition."

The Election 2004 forum was moderated by former President George Bush, the current president's father.

Cahill's counterpart in the Bush-Cheney campaign, Ken Me-

hlman, said the election illustrated the power of the new media fueled by the Internet, cable television and talk radio.

That new media has broken the monopoly of the three major television networks that once provided the bulk of information and has led to more niche marketing, Mehlman said.

"This was the first campaign where the new media was more important than the old media," he said. He predicted the effect would be felt in future election campaigns.

The discussion was very low key, with Bush primarily steering the conversation related to about a dozen questions from an audience of some 600. Many in the audience are students at his school of government at Texas A&M University.

One student worried that only wealthy people could run for office. Mehlman pointed to Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan as examples where wealth wasn't a factor.

"If you've got political talent, there's a market for that talent," he said. "Ultimately it's the quality of the candidates. ... (But) you have to ask for money. And have a lot of rich friends."

Residents of Georgia town sprucing up image

PITTS, Ga. — Years of neglect left the once-thriving business district of this rural community looking like, well, the pits.

Now residents want to turn Pitts into a pit stop featuring antiques, fine arts, pottery and Southern barbecue for travelers from Interstate 75, which runs 15 miles to the west through Cordele. They also want to make it a stop for an excursion train that occasionally runs from Cordele to Savannah.

"We always have people who stop ... and take their pictures with the city limits sign," said Sandy Guest, mayor of the town of 300. "I guess it's so they can tell their friends they have been through the pits."

But now, the downtown is showing signs of life once again. On one corner, 73-year-old Emery Mathews is at work with his skill saw and chain saw converting a service station into a flower shop.

Jackie Guest, the mayor's father-in-law, has purchased the mercantile building and plans to turn it into a general store.

From The Associated Press

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Cop faces discipline

CO DENVER — Police Sgt. Michael Karasek will be disciplined for threatening to arrest a woman for displaying on her truck a profane bumper sticker about President Bush, Police Chief Gerry Whitman said.

Shasta Bates, 26, was confronted by a man while standing in a UPS store. The man told her he was upset by her bumper sticker.

The man then went outside and flagged down Karasek, who was working off-duty in uniform at the shopping center.

Bates, three UPS employees and a Rocky Mountain News reporter who happened to be there all say that the officer threatened to arrest the woman if she didn't remove the bumper sticker from her truck.

Karasek told investigators that he did threaten the woman with arrest, but at the time he thought he was following the law, a police source said. He realized shortly after the confrontation that he was wrong, the source said.

Rethinking Washington

MD BALTIMORE — Researchers hoping to dispel George Washington's image as a stiff-jawed, boring old man are taking a bite out of history through a high-tech study of his famous false teeth.

The researchers were in Baltimore to perform laser scans on a set of Washington's dentures at the National Museum of Dentistry — dentures, they say, that were not made of wood as commonly believed.

Scientists and historians plan to use the information to help create new, expressive, life-sized figures of plaster and wax to show aspects of the 6-foot-3 Washington's personality they consider underappreciated.

"People know that Washington was great, but many people think he was boring and nothing could be further from the truth," said James C. Rees, executive director of the Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens, Washington's home in Northern Virginia.

Great water levels

MI TRAVERSE CITY — The water levels in the Great Lakes system have risen as much as 16 inches this winter from one year ago, bringing hope for next summer to the region's boaters and beach visitors.

According to the latest U.S. Army Corps of Engineers figures, Lake St. Clair's water level was 16 inches above the winter 2004 level and 4 inches above its long-term average. The other lakes reported 7- to 15-inch increases.

High water translates to cash for the shipping industry, where higher water means more cargo and bigger profits. A single inch of water allows a 1,000-foot freighter to carry 270 additional tons of goods, according to the Cleveland-based Lake Carriers' Association.

Light rail funded

AZ PHOENIX — Saying the nation's sixth-largest city is "strangling on its congestion," the country's top transit official signed



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

an agreement to free \$587 million in federal money to help sprawling Phoenix build a light rail system.

For Phoenix to "not plan ahead on something that is not focused on the automobile would be foolhardy," Federal Transit Administrator Jennifer Dorn said after signing the agreement with the mayors of Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa and Glendale.

Cars line up for blocks at some freeway onramps during peak hours, and it can easily take more than an hour for motorists to get to the outskirts from downtown during rush hour. With light rail, it will take about 20 minutes to get from downtown to Tempe and about the same time to get to north Phoenix.

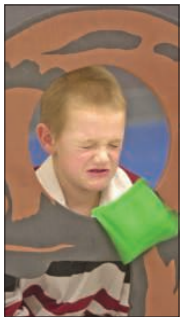
Besides easing traffic problems, Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon said light rail will create 1,600 full-time jobs.

Hearings on shrimping

LA ABBEVILLE — Public hearings are set for February to discuss capping the number of shrimp boats operating in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

New rules tentatively adopted by the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council would limit the shrimp fleet for the next decade at about 2,800 boats — those operating with federal permits at the end of 2003.

After the council makes its final decision following the public hearings, the proposal would be passed



Doesn't look like fun

Brougham Elementary third-grader Nick Jones takes a beanbag to the forehead after he stuck his head in a bull's eye during a family fun night in Olathe, Kan.

on to the National Marine Fisheries Service for one last round of consideration.

Fatal accident

VT BARTON — A Lowell teenager was killed over the weekend after a snowmobile accident on Crystal Lake.

Vermont State Police later cited the boy's father and uncle on suspicion of snowmobiling while intoxicated.

The crash happened as Randy Langmaid, 37, and his 16-year-old son, Shane, were snowmobiling with Randy Langmaid's 27-year-old brother, Jonathan, according to a news release from Vermont State Police in Derby.

Randy Langmaid broke his right arm in the crash.

Magnet message

OR EUGENE — The University of Oregon is defending its decision to tell one of its delivery drivers to remove a "Support Our Troops" magnet from the state-owned truck he uses at work.

Oregon law prohibits personal messages on state-owned vehicles, regardless of the context.

University President Dave Frohnmayer said that driver Pete Baker will face no disciplinary action, and added that he was upset that the incident has led people to question the patriotism of the university.

New attention on grapes

CA BERKELEY — California grape growers and winemakers are hung up on "hang time" — how long grapes should be left on the vine.

Some winemakers want the grapes picked late to maximize flavor.

But growers say that cuts into their per-ton profits because grapes lose weight as they ripen.

"There's a lot of controversy about this," said Andy Beckstoffer, a major Napa Valley grower who recently organized a seminar on hang time that drew more than 500 people.

The issue of hang time, also known as extended ripening, has been around for at least five years, but the past year has brought increased attention, said Karen Ross, president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers in Sacramento.

Airport not proving itself

MO ST. LOUIS — At MidAmerica Airport, the parking is free, the waits are short and the terminal is gleaming.

But it needs some flights and passengers.

Before the airport opened in 1997 in Mascoutah, Ill., about 20 miles east of St. Louis, studies predicted well over a million passengers by 2005. The 2004 figure: 7,800 passengers.

However, Illinois officials remain committed to the airport.

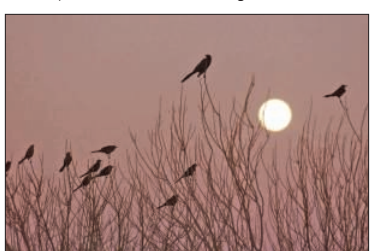
One new development has raised some optimism.

In November, TransMeridian Airlines, a charter airline out of Lithia Springs, Ga., began offering a few flights a week out of the airport, flying passengers to and from Orlando, Fla. TransMeridian recently opted to extend its term at MidAmerica through Sept. 6.



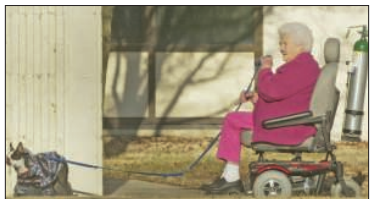
Honoring veterans

Pat Murphy, former soldier with the 78th Infantry Division, second from bottom, flashes a peace sign on the floor of the Arkansas state Senate in Little Rock, as survivors of the Battle of the Bulge are honored.



For the birds

Grackles perch on top of a tree in Abilene, Texas.



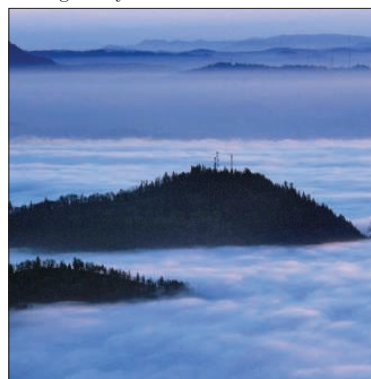
A Penny for your walk

Ethel Scobe takes her dog, Penny, for a walk in Wichita, Kan. The Boston terrier stays warm by wearing a fleece sweater.



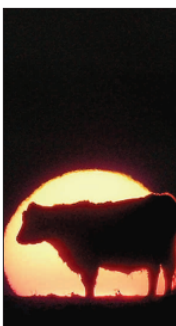
Getting toasty

California sea lions sunbathe on a San Francisco boat dock.



Blue skies

A thick mist blankets the Willamette Valley floor at sunset near Springfield, Ore.



Early morning loner

Separated from the rest of the herd, a lone Hereford cow is silhouetted against the sunrise near Mount Carroll, Ill.



Truck falls off bridge

A truck is seen on its roof in the Middle Patuxent River along Interstate 95 in Savage, Md., following a multi-vehicle accident. The tractor-trailer flipped off a bridge, landing upside down in a ravine below. The driver survived.

Arrested for drawings

FL OCALA — Two boys were arrested for making pencil-and-crayon stick figure drawings depicting a 10-year-old classmate being stabbed and hung, police said. The children, charged with a felony, were taken from school in handcuffs.

The 9- and 10-year-old boys were charged with making a written threat to kill or harm another person. They also were suspended from school.

Wife gets life sentence

MI PONTIAC — An elementary school teacher who hacked her husband to death with a hatchet was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Before she was sentenced, Nancy Seaman read a statement in which she called the jury's guilty verdict "a miscarriage of justice" and a "tragic mistake." She said she would appeal.

Prosecutors said Seaman argued with her husband, Robert, last Mother's Day, went to Home Depot to buy a hatchet, returned to their home and killed him with it. Police found Robert Seaman's body in his wife's sport utility vehicle a few days later.

Nancy Seaman claimed that she bought the hatchet for yard work and that the couple got into an argument the next morning in which her husband of 31 years menaced her with a steak knife. She said she grabbed the nearest thing to defend herself.

Oakland County Circuit Judge John McDonald said he didn't "doubt for a minute" that Seaman was physically and emotionally abused. But he said jurors did not believe the abuse was so severe that it excused the slaying.

Heifer sells and resells

MT MISSOULA — A 520-pound heifer took center stage at the Missoula Livestock Exchange, where the animal was sold and resold about a dozen times to raise money for two groups opposed to relaxing restrictions on Canadian beef imports.

Auctioning the black Angus calf, along with a Western bronze statue and some other items, raised \$5,500 to \$6,000 for the Montana Cattlemen's Association and the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, or R-CALF USA. R-CALF is the legal-action arm of the U.S. Stockgrowers Association.

The sale came nine days after authorities confirmed another case of mad cow disease in Alberta, Canada. It was the second Canadian animal found to have the deadly brain-wasting disease since December when the United States announced that cross-border cattle trade would resume in March.

Abuse allegations bills

NH CONCORD — A bill being debated by the House would prevent people from reporting child abuse anonymously, a measure that has elicited concern from children's advocates.

Rep. Lars Christiansen, R-Hudson, said too many people are falsely accused of child abuse and never know who pointed the finger of blame. He said it all adds up to a violation of civil rights.

According to the state, only 6 per-

cent of child abuse calls are anonymous. Department of Children, Youth and Families investigators oppose the idea of forcing callers to identify themselves, and they insist that their work is not heavy-handed.

School honor protested

GA CANTON — Parents and students are speaking out against plans to name a new school for a Confederate-era governor.

The Cherokee County Board of Education voted 4-3 to name the county's newest high school after former Gov. Joseph E. Brown.

However, some parents and students who will attend the school say the name invites controversy.

Scott Rowland, who has three children, said naming the school after a Confederate governor brings connotations of racism, "whether justified or not."

Brown is referred to in the history books as a "rabid secessionist." Ending slavery, he said, would lead to the South's ruin.

Besides teaching in Cherokee, Brown had a long-term interest in education. He was the first president of the Atlanta Public Schools, and he was a founding board member at historically black Atlanta University, according to Cathy Loving-Pye, historian/archivist for Atlanta schools.

Park fees now law

AZ TUCSON — Visitors to national forests and other federal lands who had hoped temporary recreation fees would soon vanish will have no such luck.

The fees were first imposed in 1996 on temporary permits and have been renewed by Congress every two years since. But last fall, Congress wrote the fees into law for at least a decade.

Congress approved the law as part of a larger appropriations bill in November, and President Bush signed it Dec. 8.

Town's population back

NC RALEIGH — At the time of the 2000 census, Princeton was still mostly a disaster zone after being devastated by flooding from Hurricane Floyd. Many of its residents abandoned their homes for drier ground.

Town officials suspected then that the population would be uncounted because of the storm, and requested a special recount.

Revised figures now show Princeton, about 60 miles northeast of Raleigh, has 2,029 residents — more than twice as many as the 974 listed in the official 2000 count.

Foster parents punished

RI PROVIDENCE — A Cranston couple's foster license is on hold after a young man in their care shot himself in the leg with a gun found in the father's sock drawer.

The police said the bullet pierced 20-year-old Daniel Lillie's lower right thigh and exited just above the back of his knee.

Veronica Manders, 38, told The Providence Journal she plans to lobby DCFY to keep her foster-care license. She said the incident has caused her and her husband to separate. The couple have taken care of 20 foster children over the past eight years.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Snoops get celebrity restraining order

Oscar-winning actress Nicole Kidman has asked a court to issue a restraining order against two Sydney photographers, their lawyer said.



Kidman

Roland Day said his client, Jamie Fawcett, and another photographer he represents had been served papers saying Kidman's application would be heard in Waverly Local Court. Day wouldn't name the other photographer.

Police officers were called to Kidman's home after an electronic listening device was found near a security vehicle that was monitoring her mansion from the street.

The bug was apparently discovered when security officers searched the grounds in preparation for Kidman's return to film her new movie, "Eucalyptus."

It wasn't immediately clear whether Kidman's application for a restraining order was related to that incident. "Ms. Kidman appears to be trying to control how the media covers her personal and public life," Day said.

He said his clients were merely doing their jobs and that granting Kidman's request would "have the dangerous consequence of encouraging anyone under the scrutiny of the media to do the same thing."

Rowling announces name of baby

J.K. Rowling, creator of the "Harry Potter" boy-wizard fantasy book series, has named her new baby daughter Mackenzie.

The 39-year-old British author gave birth to her third child at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. In a note posted on her Web site, Rowling wrote: "Her name is Mackenzie Murray (middle names Jean Rowling) and she is ridiculously beautiful, though I suppose I might be biased."

Rowling and her husband, Dr. Neil Murray, said they are "absolutely delighted" with their new arrival. The couple have a 22-month-old son, David, and Rowling has an 11-year-old daughter, Jessica, from a previous marriage.

"Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," the much-anticipated sixth book in the series, will be published on July 16.

Actor not present for knife attack

A security guard at the London theater where Christian Slater had been performing was involved in a knife attack, a spokesman for Slater's play said.

Slater had already left the West End theater when the attack occurred, said Tom Coupe, a spokesman for "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," which ended its successful five-month run. The theater security guard wasn't injured, Coupe said.



Slater

The 35-year-old actor "wasn't nearby, he didn't see this person [the attacker]. He had already left the theater," Coupe said.

"Christian wasn't directly involved," Anna Arthur, Slater's publicist, said. "It's something that happened in the streets outside, there in the West End. It involved the security guards but not Christian."

First 'Survivor' winner arraigned

Richard Hatch, the first winner of the hit CBS reality show "Survivor," was arraigned in federal court on charges that he didn't pay taxes on his \$1 million prize.



Hatch

Hatch, a resident of Newport, didn't enter a plea, but told U.S. Magistrate Judge Lincoln Almond that he understood the charges, and waived his right to a grand jury.

Almond released Hatch on \$50,000 bond, which he posted following the hearing.

Federal prosecutors charge that Hatch, 43, filed false 2000 and 2001 tax returns, omitting his income from the show, as well as another \$321,000 he was paid by a Boston radio station.

The charges carry a maximum five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine for each charge.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



ABACA PRESS/KRT

Bobby McFerrin, second from left, his wife Debbie McFerrin, left, and their children attend a show in New York City on Nov. 15. McFerrin doesn't hate his most popular song — you know the one — but he won't perform it.

The disappearance of 'Don't worry, be happy'

He's pretty happy, but you aren't going to hear Bobby McFerrin's most famous song anytime soon — at least not from him

BY BRAD BARNES

Knight Ridder Newspapers

Bobby McFerrin does not perform his most famous song in concert.

But to quote that song: Don't worry, be happy. His shows are a free-form amalgam of jazz singing, improvised voice work and audience participation. And, McFerrin hopes, they're lots of fun.

"I'd say 90 percent of the audiences might be a little disappointed [I didn't play the song]," he says, "but hopefully they've had so much fun between, you know, the first number and the last that they're OK."

"Every once in a while someone will say, 'How come you didn't do "Don't Worry, Be Happy"?' But they're still asking for my autograph," he says.

"They're still taking pictures and we're all having a good time."

The infectious melody of "Don't Worry, Be Happy" made it a No. 1 smash in 1988, with part of the charm coming from its novelty. McFerrin's voice provided 12 tracks of hums, pop-bops and doo-doots in lieu of any instrumental support.

But he has a love-hate relationship with the piece. Its success made McFerrin a household name. But it also defined the man — a jazz artist and the son of two classical vocalists — as a pop singer in the public's mind.

"I don't regret its success at all," McFerrin says. "It's still working for me, my goodness, after all these years. It's still out there; people still talk about it." Companies use it for commercials or whatever. It's still working."

Still, he hasn't performed the song in 17 years. Yet his Web site embraces it, with playful links like "Don't Worry,

Be Bobby," and a collection of press quotes calling the man a one-hit wonder.

For the most part, critics have embraced McFerrin as a true innovator, unlike any vocalist before. That distinction might have come partly from his self-imposed exile from other jazz singers.

"In the beginning, I purposely stayed away from listening to singers for two years," he says. "I didn't want to, like, copy someone's licks, knowing how impressionable I am. I was afraid of doing such a diligent search in trying to find the voice that I would end up copying that voice, whoever it was. So I actually made myself take it two years away from jazz singers."

"Once I got really comfortable with my technique, and I was beginning to understand who I was, I started listening to others," says McFerrin, now 54.

(He doesn't remember who he broke his fast with. "That was a long, long time ago," he says. "It could've been Al Jarreau, could've been Jon Hendricks.")

In keeping with that spirit of innovation, he starts every solo show by performing a song even he doesn't know.

He improvises. "I do the hardest thing first, the scariest thing first, which is to go out there without any ideas and just open my mouth and start singing. And whatever it is, is what it is. It's never a tune that anyone knows. It's never an identifiable piece," he says. "It's always something that's made up on the spot."

That may be 5 minutes of the show, or it might be 25 minutes. And after that, he draws in the spectators to help with the performance.

"Some audiences are very conservative. They're not used to being told to sing with me," he says. "But I've never, never, never, ever failed to get an audience to sing."

"I don't regret its success at all. It's still working for me, my goodness, after all these years. It's still out there; people still talk about it."

Bobby McFerrin
Musician

Horoscope

Mars and Pluto buddy up for some cosmic rock 'n' roll. Areas of life that have suffered from a lack of confrontation now receive due attention—not to mention a fierce attitude. It doesn't always take a revolution to change someone's mind or to handle a squinty situation, but if revolt seems necessary, many people are willing to go there.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(January 28). This year features your sensational rise to a position you've had your eye on for several years now. You're going about business in a more politically savvy manner and therefore find yourself in favor with foreign diplomats. A well-constructed financial plan is your ticket to higher earnings. Make your romantic feelings known in May.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

You're inventive and sharp. But be careful not to overdo things. It's the simple idea that takes off like a rocket. A Gemini or Sagittarius will help you fulfill a tall order in the easiest possible manner.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

Your mind needs some extra help in getting going. Confused emotions could be putting a damper on your synapses. Deep breathing helps. The more you read, the better you think.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21).

Listen: The faint echoes of 1,000 violins play in the distance. Why do people tug on your heartstrings so? Perhaps because you are easily swayed by stories of an unhappy childhood.

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

Just because you've been unaware of a trend thus far doesn't mean the trend doesn't exist. Look for possible patterns in your relationships. Discovering a self-perpetuated cycle could set you free.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

You'll hear some pretty silly excuses as to why someone didn't come through

for you. But you'll probably be too busy accepting the gracious generosity from other people to care! A Libra flirts with you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Fighting for someone else's rights brings out the warrior in you. "No" is not an option, and you're willing to make a scene if that's what it takes. You're now the sign most likely to be called to jury duty.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

The rules are simple now, so follow them instead of looking for deeper explanations. Be wary of people who need to dominate the conversation. If you take the relationship further, they may bully you in other ways.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

Exterior influences promise to soothe and calm you. They can't take the place of internal satisfaction, though. You are quite susceptible to advertising, so be careful not to fall into a consumer vortex.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

The energy of love is always there; we need only be open to it. Reaching out to friends, however small the gesture, will bring about a generally uniting energy. Feelings of isolation melt away.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

Defenses are there for a reason, right? Without them, wouldn't you crumble? Maybe not. It's more likely that you're holding onto a certain coping mechanism out of habit. Let go, and you'll become invulnerable.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

Wisdom comes from the mouths of babes—or at least from the mouth of someone you formerly didn't consider wise. You'll recognize the rightness of a statement and be utterly shocked.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

You hurt yourself into the pool of life without concern for safety or liability—which is just as it should be! Your cannonball style looks like so much fun to everyone else that you'll soon attract a crowd of wannabe revellers.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



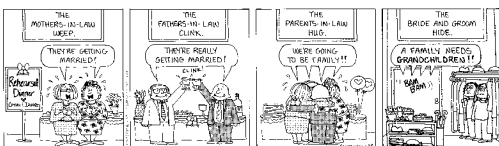
Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



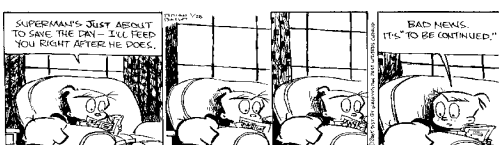
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



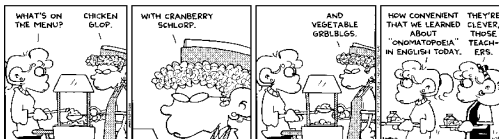
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



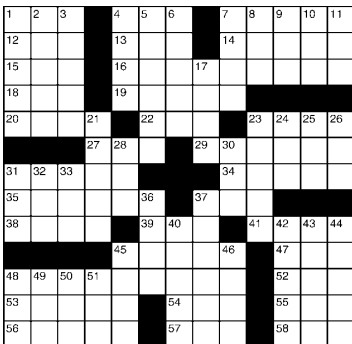
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Stern
- 4 Prohibit
- 7 Settle a debt
- 12 "Eureka!"
- 13 Shock's partner
- 14 Outlier
- 15 Baskin-Robbins
- 16 Filled to the brim
- 18 Milwaukee
- 19 Andrea Bocelli
- 20 100 centesimi
- 22 Cill quintupled
- 23 Broadway debacle
- 27 Pump purchase
- 29 Ass or zebra
- 31 Duck
- 34 Hypnotized
- 35 Script text
- 37 Recyclable item
- 38 Show gumption
- 39 "Go, team!"
- 41 Saferacer
- 45 Custom
- 47 Chap
- 48 Spineless one
- 52 Resume
- 53 Like college walls
- 54 Sandra or Ruby
- 55 Shade provider
- 56 "— on the Church on Time"
- 57 Nevada town
- 58 Turn red?

Down

- 1 "— Attraction"
- 2 Tex-Mex treat
- 3 Antic
- 4 Mexican peninsula, for short
- 5 Edgar and Hugo
- 6 Altered recording
- 7 Look-alikes, idiomatically
- 8 Curve
- 9 Tie up the phone
- 10 Handle
- 11 — XING (road sign)
- 17 Macadamize
- 21 Nimble
- 23 Laugh-provoking
- 24 Cover
- 25 Indivisible
- 26 Apiece

- 28 Commotion
- 30 Sine-nod link
- 31 Toss in
- 32 Through
- 33 Galley
- 36 Implement
- 36 Seles competitor
- 37 Swindle
- 40 Tolerate
- 42 Surround
- 43 Closely
- 43 With festivity
- 44 Folklore figure
- 45 Stevenson
- 46 People in general
- 48 Leprechaun's dance
- 50 Torched
- 51 Moon vehicle

Answer to Previous Puzzle



I-28

CRYPTOQUIP

H YCDHY AHSZEL MHT
AMJT VCAAC JL JAT
HOSZAJTZVZLAT: "AMJETA

DCVZ. AMJETA TZESZ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHICH PROMINENT
SWORDSMEN SHOULD DWELL IN OMAN'S
CAPITAL? THE THREE MUSCAT-EERS!
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals H

Report online predator promptly

Dear Abby: My brother recently discovered that his 16-year-old stepdaughter has been chatting online with a man in another state, up to and including phone sex. He went into her e-mail without her permission to see what was going on after she ran up a \$300 phone bill.

When he confronted her about the bill, she lied and said she had been talking to a girlfriend. Her mother — my brother's wife — thinks her daughter would never do anything wrong and gets mad at my brother if he inquires otherwise. He doesn't want to do anything about the situation for fear of her wrath.

I say, the girl's safety is more important than a fight with his wife. Do you know if there's a task force that he could e-mail this information to and remain anonymous? I would like to see that man caught before something horrible happens to this beautiful young girl.

— Protective in Colorado

Dear Abby



Dear Protective: The girl has been victimized by a predator. Your brother's wife is doing her daughter no good by behaving like an ostrich and pretending this incident never happened.

There are several things your brother can do. He should contact his local FBI office and/or visit the Web site www.fbi.gov and check out the area devoted to cyber crimes — specifically crimes against children under "What We Investigate." If he is referred to his local police department, he should contact them immediately so they can investigate further. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children also has an informative Web site, www.missingkids.com, which provides information regarding exploited children and an opportunity to report it.

Dear Abby: I am a single woman, and while I have kissed a

lot of men, only a few were great kissers. You don't want to end up on a great guy because his kiss is only average. I gently tried to provide a bit of coaching with an ex, but it made him defensive.

How do you teach a middle-aged man to kiss? Before I get into another relationship, a little advice in this area would be helpful. Also, would you approach it early on — or after there is an established relationship?

— Wants a Great Kiss
Dear Wants: Since different people are turned on by different things, no one should expect to get it right on the first try. A considerate kisser wants to please.

The best way I know of to "teach" a middle-aged man to kiss — or a young one or an old one, for that matter — is to demonstrate, demonstrate. Practice makes perfect, and the way to approach it is soon after he makes his next attempt.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CINEW

DEGEH

URKEEB

REECCO

www.jumble.com

Print answer here:

Yesterday's

Jumbles: LEGAL PAGAN INLAID AERATE

Answer: The bachelors friends had a difficult time doing this — "PARTING"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



KNITTED WITH A COMPLEX STITCH

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Spouse should check out vasectomy

Dear Annie: I am a 36-year-old mother of two. After our first child was born, I suffered four miscarriages, two of which required a D&C, which created adhesions from scar tissue. I underwent two hysteroscopies and an emergency laparoscopy. After all this, we were able to have a second child, delivered via C-section. But I then had another miscarriage and decided enough was enough. I don't want to get pregnant again.

I would like my husband to have a vasectomy, but he refuses. Our current form of birth control is the withdrawal method, which isn't much fun, not to mention it's not the most effective. Frankly, I've been poked and prodded enough, and I don't want to undergo more surgery for a tubal ligation. Birth control pills are not an option, and I have an allergy to latex, so condoms are out.

On top of my medical history, it's cheaper for my husband to have a vasectomy, and the re-

Annie's Mailbox



ery time is fairly quick. A tubal would require a month off work without pay, not to mention the increased risks and chance of infection.

My mother-in-law has her boy convinced he'll suffer lifelong urinary infections if he undergoes a vasectomy. I think my husband believes he'll be somehow less of a man, so he is dead-set against it.

Dear Southwest: It doesn't say much about your husband's character that he would put his macho pride above your health. We won't even get into his intrusive mother, who has no business being part of this decision.

For the record, vasectomies are quite safe and have absolutely no effect on a man's sexual drive or masculinity. If your husband is worried about surgery, he can look into non-surgical options.

Dear Annie: For years, my husband and I have been helping our daughter and son-in-law by

taking care of their three children, whom we dearly love. When our daughter was working, she paid us a little, although it didn't cover the cost of the children's food or the gas to take them to and from school. Now that she is back in college, she says she can't pay us anything at all.

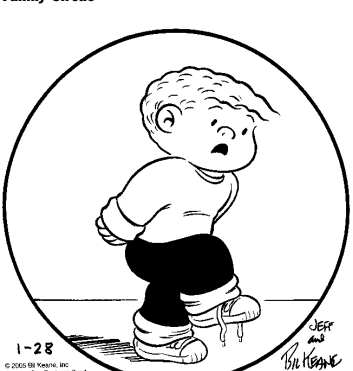
We have the grandkids every day. At dinner, their parents stop by to eat with us. Money that we hoped to have for our golden years is dwindling away. How do we tell our daughter she needs to help us with the cost of caring for their children, or she needs to take care of them herself?

Almost Broke Grandma: Dear Grandma: You tell her in plain English. She is taking advantage of you because you permit it. Inform your daughter that she needs to find other arrangements, because you no longer have the time or money to raise her children. It's her turn.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sauer, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creator Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

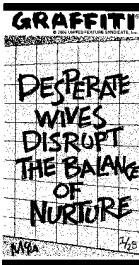
Family Circus



1-28

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www.familycircus.com

"Oh, no! I lost my knot!"

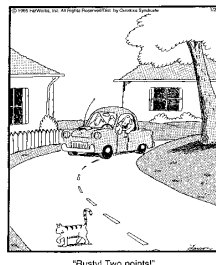


Domis the Menace



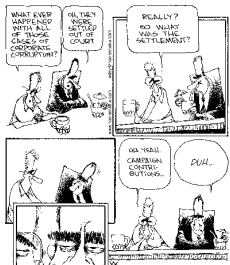
© Gary Larson

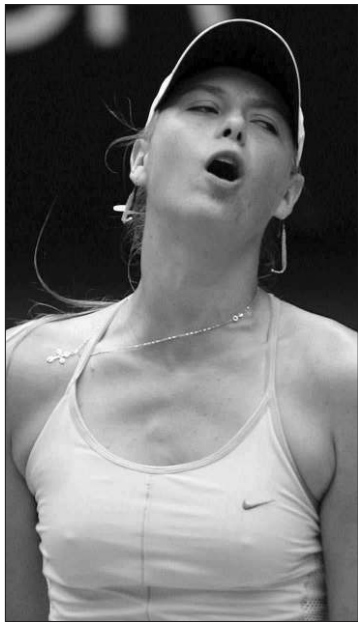
The Far Side



"Rusty! Two points!"

Non Sequitur





Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova of Russia shows frustration during her women's singles semifinal match against Serena Williams in the Australian Open. The American won the match 2-6, 7-5, 8-6.

And in this corner...

Sharapova, Serena Williams are storied rivals

BY DENNIS PASSA

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — It's not in the same league — yet — of Billie Jean vs. Chris, Martina vs. Steffi, or most recently, Serena vs. Venus.

But the recent rivalry in big matches between Serena Williams, 23, and 17-year-old Maria Sharapova has the potential — both players agree — to turn into an enduring one.

"I think she is one of the best competitors out there," Sharapova said Thursday after her 2-6, 7-5, 8-6 loss to Williams in an Australian Open semifinal in which Williams saved three match points.

"She's been in those situations when she was down in the third set, and out of nowhere she knows how to turn it around. That comes from experience, that comes from her fighting spirit."

Williams, who has six career Grand Slam singles titles, won the first match against Sharapova at Miami in 2004. She then lost both big ones — last year's Wimbledon final and in the season-ending WTA Championships. "I think it definitely lived up to expectations," Williams said of Thursday's match. "I definitely think she has a fighting spirit and I think that's gotten her to where she is today."

She also feels that Sharapova, who moved to Florida from Russia at age 9, considers her a role model.

"I think she [Serena Williams] is one of the best competitors out there. She's been in those situations when she was down in the third set, and out of nowhere she knows how to turn it around."

Maria Sharapova

Wimbledon champion

"I definitely think she's probably looked at me as a reference growing up, which is exciting," Williams said. "I never thought I'd play someone that probably looked up to me."

The mutual admiration ended there Thursday. Asked what Williams had showed her during the match, Sharapova replied, "Nothing."

And Williams reminded everyone that, although she credited Sharapova with having a fighting spirit, "I'm still top fighter out there."

Sharapova could learn from Williams' comeback in the match. Sharapova served for the match at 5-4 in both the second and third sets, but she didn't have a match point in the second set, but was a point away from victory three times in the third.

"In the second, I thought, 'OK, I could have won this set already, why am I still out here?'" Williams said. "In the third, I thought, 'OK, I've been in this situation before, no problem.'"

Williams had saved match points and won three previous matches — against Kim Clijsters in the 2003 Australian Open semifinal (in which she beat sister Venus in the final), and twice against Lindsay Davenport, her opponent in Saturday's final.

"Those are always the best wins, when you're down match point, because you realize that you can't give up," she said.

Sharapova said she didn't give up either on Thursday.

"I gave it all I had. I played from my heart," she said. "I didn't take my chances when I could. And that's what this game is all about. The match could have gone any way, and she took her chances and she played well when she needed to. That's the difference."

The third-ranked Sharapova was philosophical about the loss.

"This is not a sprint, it's a marathon," Sharapova said, foreshadowing future big matches against Williams and other top players.

"Of course I'm sad, and obviously it's a tough one to lose. But I've got a long way ahead of me."

Safin dazzles in beating Federer

BY PAUL ALEXANDER

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Marat Safin ended top-ranked Roger Federer's 26-match winning streak in a classic Australian Open semifinal, outlasting the defending champion 5-7, 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (8-6), 9-7 in a dazzling 4½-hour match.

Safin, seeded fourth and trying to regain the No. 1 ranking he held briefly after winning the U.S. Open in 2000, saved one match point in overcoming the unusually jittery Federer, who hadn't dropped a set in five previous matches, including a quarter-final domination of Andre Agassi.

Federer received treatment for elbow and back pain in the fifth set, then saved six match points before Safin broke his serve with a forehand into an open court as Federer watched from his knees.

Safin, reaching the final at Melbourne Park for the third time in four years, next meets the winner of Friday night's semifinal between second-ranked Andy Roddick and No. 3 Lleyton Hewitt.

The women's final matches seventh-seeded Serena Williams against top-ranked Lindsay Davenport. Williams fended off three

match points to avenge her Wimbledon final loss to No. 4 Maria Sharapova 2-6, 7-5, 8-6, stretching her Australian Open winning streak to 13 matches.

Davenport looked lethargic after playing more than four hours Wednesday, but rallied to hold off No. 19 Nathalie Dechy of France 2-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4.

Safin vs. Federer was pure crowd-pleasing tennis between two of the game's most gifted all-around players. Every point was a struggle as they punished weak shots and swapped stinging groundstrokes and drop volleys.

"It's like a brain fight against... Roger Federer," Safin said. "I think we played the best we could and I couldn't give any more than that."

Safin was exhausted going into last year's final — which he lost to Federer — after six matches that averaged three hours.

Demonstrating the skills that took him to No. 1 after his only Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows, he was much fresher this time — and needed to be.

"I'm not playing against just a simple player. He's No. 1 in the world," Safin said. It was his birthday on Thursday, and he planned a quiet celebration with

a glass of champagne when he got back to his room in the early hours of Friday morning.

"It was one of the toughest matches of my life. I need time to recover," he said. "Five sets is a kind of lottery. Anything can happen."

While serving at 5-6, he mis-hit a forehand, then sent a backhand long to give Federer the first set. Frustrated, the mercurial Russian tossed his racket high in the air and missed the catch.

Federer then lost his first set of the tournament, showing the first real signs of tension in 11 days. Serving at 1-1 in the second set, he smacked an overhead wide, then hit a backhand into the net for the only service break. Safin held serve the rest of the way.

Usually unflappable, Federer committed an uncharacteristic 14 errors in the set to just five for Safin. Clearly frustrated, Federer shouted at himself after missing opportunities and charged the net more frequently than usual.

As in the first set, Federer broke serve with Safin serving at 5-6 in the fourth. Safin smashed his second racket of the tournament after one error, and sent a forehand way long.

The last time they met in a tie-breaker, Federer prevailed 20-18 in the Masters Cup. This time, Safin trailed 5-2 before running off the next three points. Federer made a stunning drop shot from the baseline to serve for the match at 6-5. Safin then won the next three points to force a deciding fifth set.

Federer called in trainer Paul Ness, who massaged his right forearm and elbow. Three games later, Ness returned to stretch out Federer's back as he lay on the court.

Federer said he felt some pain in his right arm, from the shoulder to his fingers.

"It's not an injury — it's just something that was bothering me," he said.

Safin took a 4-2 lead in the deciding set as Federer committed his seventh double fault on break point. Clearly frustrated, Federer was saving two match points as Safin served 5-3, then held to get back on serve. Federer fended off another match point in the next game, another two while serving at 6-7 and a sixth at 7-8 before Safin finished it.

Davenport is healthy after a bout of bronchitis just before the

Australian Open

Thursday
At Melbourne Park
Melbourne, Australia

Purse: \$142 million (Grand Slam)

Surface: Hard outdoor

Singles

Men Semifinals

Marat Safin (4, Russia) def. Roger Federer (1, Switzerland), 5-7, 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (6).

Women Semifinals

Serena Williams (2, United States) def. Maria Sharapova (4, Russia), 2-6, 7-5, 8-6.

Quarterfinals

Safin def. Nathalie Dechy (19), France, 2-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-4.

Williams def. Venus Williams (5, United States), 6-3, 6-2.

Other top players

Mirnyi (4, Belarus), 6-1, 6-3.

Other top players

Kevin Ulster (4, South Africa), def. Bob Bryan (14, United States), 6-3, 6-2.

Other top players

Russia, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 7-6 (8).

tournament, which she won in 2000 for her last Grand Slam title. But she was tighter after a 2½-hour semifinal victory Friday that was followed by more than 1½ hours in doubles.

It showed. She finished with 48 winners and 52 enforced errors — but only 11 in the final set as she finally loosened up.

"It's been a long two days. I woke up this morning, I just felt pretty tight all over," Davenport said. "It wasn't my greatest day playing tennis — but I'll take it."

T.O.'s ankle gives media something to gnaw on

Let's just hand the Super Bowl MVP award to Terrell Owens right now. Even if he doesn't play a single down for the Philadelphia Eagles in the big game, he will deserve it. Even the New England Patriots win, Owens should be the one.

Remember, the media vote on these things, and his attempt to become the latest Curt Schilling, Willis Reed or Kirk Gibson, creates a much-needed topic for discussion. The industry has hours of video and yards of paper to fill, and the status of Owens' busted ankle is real drama, if not real news.

Will he play or won't he? The coach says no on it. The doctor says yes. The coach backs down. The trainer says maybe.

Owens says he'll be there, because he has been healed spiritually.

Owens jogs at practice. Trainer says "our risk-reward is different than the doctor's risk-reward."

The story has already been inflated to the point of bursting. By next week, football fans everywhere will recognize the Eagles' trainer as a member of the family, a fixture in their living rooms. The coverage will be incessant, every day, every hour — even if it means nothing more than repeatedly replaying Wednesday's news conference.

Gwen Knapp



There will be no time-out on T.O.

But if he has spared reporters a trip to see the long snapper's second cousin who whittles Popsicle sticks into images of Paul Tagliabue, we will all be grateful.

The two weeks between the conference championships and the Super Bowl require some kind of distraction, regardless of what the coaches like to say. And for the Eagles, the distraction may be even more valuable than a healthy Owens.

They are playing a team that will be in its third Super Bowl in four years. For the Patriots, professional detachment from the hype of the game is possible. They're unlikely to be overwhelmed by the reality of it. But if the Eagles try to treat the Super Bowl like any other game, they will be deluding themselves. The tension needs to be broken, and the T.O. debate could be just the right hammer.

Several of the Eagles have already made it clear that they do not appreciate the suggestions that they need to win. They are still being judged by their performance in last year's NFL title game, in which their receivers were knocked around by

Carolina's defensive backs. But the team overall is much better this year, because of the addition of Jevon Kearse on the defensive line and the good health of multi-dimensional running back Brian Westbrook.

Owens added to the offense, but he has also been given credit for upping the swagger factor in the locker room. In a weird way, his absence may have done just as much for the team's confidence. The Eagles won two playoff games without him, including Sunday's dismantling of Atlanta, which committed just one turnover and still couldn't stay with the Eagles.

In Jacksonville, they will be feeding off the athlete's favorite energy source — perceived disrespect. If they take the field without T.O., after hearing and reading about him all week, they won't miss him nearly as much as most pundits believe. (The athlete's friend Chad Lewis is a more urgent problem.)

If Owens does come out, they will get an emotional lift, but the real issue will be



Owens

whether he is healthy enough to play at or close to his peak. If not, will Andy Reid have the courage to keep him on the sideline, or use him sporadically as a decoy?

That's what we get to ponder for the next 10 days, and the Patriots will surely appreciate it. The hot air in advance of the game will blow more toward the Eagles, giving the Pats room to breathe. They get to continue being Patriots, the reigning champions, excellent in all the little ways that media days doesn't begin to explain.

With two weeks between the Super Bowl and the conference championships game, T.O. can't really be like other players would-be champs. The game before Schilling's Game 6 victory in the ALCS, the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees played for 5 hours, 49 minutes. The game before that, they played for 5 hours, 2 minutes. Reporters and fans barely had time to catch their breath before Schilling took the mound on an ankle leaking blood.

For the Super Bowl, there is too much time, not enough information, and barely any action. An investigative reporter might try to catch one of the coaches in a smile, but it won't make much of a story. No one likes a scoreless tie. So it's T.O. to the rescue, possibly for the Eagles, definitely for the media.

Gwen Knapp is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle.

Cowher's vow: 'This group will get back up'

By ALAN ROBINSON

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher isn't ready to forget about 16 victories just because of another bad play off loss.

On Wednesday, the defiant Cowher said the Steelers' 41-27 loss to New England on Sunday will be springboard to more successes, not a stopping point for a franchise that lost its fourth AFC championship game at home in 11 seasons.

Cowher, no doubt aware his team is being dismissed again for its inability to win a big game, said these Steelers set a high standard for his future teams with their unselfishness and ability to overcome adversity.

"Please do not allow the one game to define this season," Cowher said. "To finish 16-2, 15-1 in the regular season, and win 15 straight games is quite an achievement."

The Steelers manhandled Super Bowl finalists New England and Philadelphia on consecutive weeks during the season, but became only the second NFL team to go 15-1 and to reach the Super Bowl, joining the 1998 Minnesota Vikings.

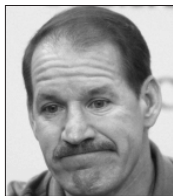
The one-sided loss in the rematch against New England on Sunday resulted in an emotional team meeting. The move visibly deflated the largest home crowd in Steelers history and, with Pittsburgh's momentum suddenly halted, the Patriots scored the next 10 points.

"It was a very close, football team, which made the hurt that much more," Cowher said. "I have always said I believe the measure of any one person or group of people should be how many times you get knocked down, it should be how many times you get back up."

"This group will get back up. This is not the end. In my mind, it is the beginning."

Cowher did not deny the repeated failure in conference championship games or strategic criticism of Sunday's loss, including his much-criticized decision to kick a field goal early in the fourth quarter with the Steelers in position to close within 34-27.

The move visibly deflated the largest home crowd in Steelers history and, with Pittsburgh's momentum suddenly halted, the Patriots scored the next 10 points.



Bill Cowher said, "I have always said I believe the measure of any one person or group of people should not be how many times you get knocked down, it should be how many times you get back up."

AP

"Life is full of disappointments," Cowher said. "Sometimes we wonder why. But ours is not to wonder why, ours is to continue to try. We will do that."

The Steelers' roster is bound to change, with line-backer Kendrick Bell and wide receiver Plaxico Burress among those likely to leave as free agents. Running back Jerome Bettis hasn't decided if he will return for a 13th NFL season.

But Cowher expects his assistant coaches to return — a change from a year ago, when offensive coordinator Mike Mularkey left to become Buffalo's head coach and defensive coordinator, and Tim Lewis was fired.

Cowher also said Ben Roethlisberger did not break two toes on his right foot, as the rookie said Tuesday. The quarterback might have mildly aggravated a toe injury that occurred in high school or college but does not need treatment, Cowher said.

The Steelers' ability to overcome numerous injuries by having backups step in and play like starters caused Cowher to re-evaluate his previous policy that a starter should lose his job to injury. Maddox, Bell, running back Duce Staley and cornerback Chad Scott were among those who didn't return to the lineup after becoming healthy.

"I understand somebody getting frustrated by it or upset by it but, at the same time, (if somebody comes in playing well and you're playing well as a team, I don't want you to say that)," Cowher said.

Despite the Steelers' numerous injuries, only backup tight end Matt Cushing (wrist) and running back Verron Haynes (knee) needed offseason surgery. Cowher, like Roethlisberger and offensive coordinator Ken Whisenand, also wants Burress back, though it seems likely he will sign elsewhere. Burress and Cowher had a long talk following Monday's meeting.

"I think he's matured as a person, (with) his work ethic and his approach to the game," Cowher said. "If that was the last time I talked to him, I wanted him to know how I felt."

Ravens RB Lewis gets four-month jail term

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Baltimore Ravens running back Jamal Lewis was sentenced to four months in prison Wednesday for using a cell phone to try to set up a cocaine deal about 4½ years ago.

The penalty, worked out with prosecutors in October, should allow Lewis to return to the Ravens well before the start of the 2005 season. At most, he might miss the opening of training camp.

He also will spend two months in a halfway house and perform 500 hours of community service following his prison term.

Lewis pleaded guilty to trying to set up the drug deal a few months after the Ravens chose him No. 5 overall in the 2000 NFL Draft. No drugs were exchanged.

Prosecutors agreed to drop more serious drug conspiracy and attempted cocaine possession charges.

"I'm truly sorry for what I did," Lewis said to U.S. District Judge Orlando Evans.

Explaining the short sentence, the judge said the government didn't have a strong case and noted the only witness against Lewis was an informant with a lengthy criminal record.

Evans said she was also giving Lewis "credit for stepping up to the bar" and admitting his guilt.

The football player has until Feb. 4 to surrender to allow him time to have a cast removed from his right ankle, the judge said.

Lewis recently had surgery on the right ankle.

Evans said he will recommend that Lewis serve his time at a federal prison in Maryland or the Federal Reformatory in Montgomery, Ala. If Lewis reports at the latest possible date and does not get time



off for good behavior, the earliest he would be released from the halfway house would be Aug. 4. The Ravens said the team would not be commenting on Lewis' sentence.

Tollner joins Lions as offensive coordinator

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — The Detroit Lions hired Ted Tollner as offensive coordinator on Wednesday, reuniting him with head coach Steve Mariucci.

The 64-year-old Tollner replaced Sherman Lewis, who retired after the regular season. Tollner was offensive coordinator for San Francisco last year and quarterbacks coach for the 49ers from 2002-2003.

Four replacements added to Pro Bowl rosters

Atlanta Falcons return specialist Allen Rossum was selected to the NFC Pro Bowl Sunday Wednesday as an injury replacement for Detroit's Reggie Drummond.

Miami Dolphins cornerback Patrick Surtain was added to the AFC squad, replacing injured Baltimore Ravens cornerback Chris McClinton.

Pittsburgh Steelers defensive end Aaron Smith and offensive tackle Marvel Smith also were added to the AFC team on Wednesday.

Aaron Smith replaces New York Jets defensive end John Abraham (knee), and Marvel Smith replaces Philadelphia City Chiefs offensive tackle Willie Roaf (ankle).

Waldorf and Funk among five Hope Classic leaders

The Associated Press

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Duffey Waldorf rolled in eight birdie putts, didn't make a bogey and still had lots of company atop the leader board.

Golf roundup

Waldorf's 8-under 64 in Wednesday's opening round of the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic was only good enough to put him in a five-way tie for the lead.

Fred Funk, Robert Damron, Ted Purdy and Joe Ogilvie also opened the 90-hole tournament with 64s.

Fred Couples, the 1998 champion, had a 65 and was in another group of five in the desert tournament in which scores traditionally are among the lowest of the year.

Defending champion Phil Mickelson, who also won the event in 2002, shot 66 and was tied with six others.

Only 13 of the 128 players finished their first round over par.

Mike Weir, the 2003 Hope champion, opened with a 71, leaving him tied for 93rd.

The players rotate among four courses for the first four days of the pro-am, then the low 70 pros and ties play the final round at PGA West on Sunday.

Waldorf, looking for his first victory in almost five years, began his round at PGA West by rolling in a 6-foot birdie putt on the first hole, then finished it with a fine shot out of the bunker and a 4-foot birdie putt on the final hole.

He was dead-accurate with his irons most of the day, setting up short birdie putts.

"Accuracy and good putting for me today," Waldorf said. "I putted the best I've putted this year, really had good pace on the ball and was reading the greens well."

"I kept the ball in play for the most part, didn't get in a lot of trouble."

Couples was pleased with his round, but cautious about getting too greedy.

"You can't go around thinking you're going to shoot 7-under out here every day," he said after his round at Tamarisk Country Club. "What I'm trying to pay attention to is how I'm hitting the ball."

"What I did today is I really drove the ball well, compared to San Diego, where I was everywhere. Today I hit the ball long and straight and the course played easy."

Mickelson, coming off a tie for 50th at Torrey Pines in his 2005 debut, is seeking improvement.

"My short irons, certainly that's an area I need to work on a lot this week," said Mickelson, who beat Skip Kendall in a playoff to win the event last year.

Purdy enjoyed his first round in the desert event.

"This is the first time I've been eligible to play here," he said. "I've tried to get exemptions in the past, but have not been successful at that. I earned my way in this year."

The 31-year-old Purdy, who seems to be improving with age, said he took birdies as they came during his Hope debut.

"When you start forcing birdies, they don't necessarily come," he said after logging eight birdies and no bogeys at Tamarisk.

Purdy, who had a pair of second-place finishes last year during his second full season on the tour, particularly enjoyed playing with amateurs during the first round of the Hope.

"The amateurs are the ones that pay my paycheck. They're the ones that support the tour," Purdy said. "It's great to get to play with the people that support us. I have yet to have an amateur partner I didn't enjoy. This is one of our



Actor/comedian George Lopez reads a green during the Bob Hope Classic on Wednesday. Celebrities play with pros during the first four days of the 90-hole event that is played on four courses.

ways of giving back to them."

David Duval shot 10-over 82 at PGA West, 23 shots more than when he won the tournament on the final day six years ago on a tour record-tying 59 on the same course.

John Daly shot 72 and was tied for 126th.

Montgomery shoots 65, leads by three in Singapore

SINGAPORE — Colin Montgomerie shot 7-under-par 65 Thursday to take a three-hole lead after the first round of the Calcutta Masters.

The defending champion made seven birdies at the Laguna National Golf and Country Club to lead Nick Dougherty, Mark Foster and Danny Chia, who all shot 68. Seven were tied at 69.

More NHL talks yield promise of further talks

By IRA PODELL
The Associated Press

There's no telling how the NHL labor negotiations are going to be closed doors.

For that matter, there's no telling where those doors even are.

So closely guarded are the minutest details from the league's latest round of talks with the players' association, exactly what they're talking about is anyone's guess.

The sides held their third meeting in less than a week Wednesday in Toronto and were successful in keeping the exact location a secret. After the 5½-hour negotiating session, the only detail revealed was that another meeting would take place this week.

Although nothing had been officially scheduled by Wednesday night, the sides were leaning toward getting together either Thursday or Friday in New York.

There is no secret that time is running out to save the season. How the NHL and the players' association are working to prevent that has become a big mystery. Talks were held in small groups again on Wednesday, three people representing the union and four on the league side.

"We will meet again this week," NHL chief legal officer Bill Daly said. "We have no further comment at this time."

Before getting together this week, both sides took a tight-lipped approach, adding they wanted negotiations to be out of the public eye.

During a two-day meeting last week in Chicago and Toronto, they tried unsuccessfully to get together in secret. Both parties believe they will have a better chance of getting something accomplished if they can talk out of the public eye.

Daly told The Associated Press on Tuesday that discussions were at a critical stage and that only days remained to reach a deal that would save the season. The fact that more talks have been set up provides at least a glimmer of hope that the NHL won't become the first North American sports league to lose an entire season to a labor dispute.

Auburn's Williams grabs spotlight in Senior Bowl

By JOHN ZENOR
The Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — Carnell Williams has been a center of attention in the Senior Bowl all week, visiting with NFL head coaches, doing nonstop interviews and lobbying hard to become the first black pick in April's draft.

His chief competition for that spot, Auburn teammate Ronnie Brown and Texas' Cedric Benson, opted to skip the showcase game for top senior NFL prospects.

The Tigers thrived with Williams and Brown splitting time in the backfield, though it meant neither had gaudy statistics.

"I definitely want to get my share of carries and be the feature back and bring some game that I play on to the Super Bowl in the near future," said Williams, a second-team AP All-American as a senior.

He and California's J.J. Arrington are the two most high-profile backs in Saturday's game. Kay-Jay Harris of West Virginia and Tennessee's Cedric Houston are among those joining Williams in the South's team's backfield. Kansas State's 5-foot-10 sparkplug Darren Sproles is one of the North's running backs.

Williams has met with Dolphins coach Nick Saban and spent plenty of time with the Bucs' Jon Gruden, coach of the South team. Both have top-five picks and are in the market for a tailback. Williams has enthusiastically praised both teams and coaches.

Gruden likes Williams' skills.

"He can stop on a dime. He can go from here to there as well as a lot of people," Gruden said. "He's a good kid. You watch him score touchdowns inside the 5 as a short-yardage runner, he runs with power. He's just a hell of a back if you ask me."

Williams said he didn't follow Brown or Benson in turning down invitations because, "I just want to be the No. 1 back once I leave here."

"Between now and April, anything could happen, anything could change," said Williams, who broke Bo Jackson's record at Auburn with 45 rushing touchdowns and finished second in career yards rushing.

"I'm not getting my heart sold on going to Miami or going to the Bucs, because I know this is a business. Whatever happens, I'm just excited."

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Underachieving German gets in line Karl

The Associated Press

DENVER — George Karl was hired as head coach of the Denver Nuggets on Thursday, returning to the NBA after nearly two years to take over a team that has failed to live up to lofty expectations.

The deal was finalized Thursday morning and announced in Milwaukee, where the Nuggets play the Bucks on Thursday night.

Karl is expected to be on the bench for that game, making his debut with the Nuggets against the team that fired him in 2003.

Interim coach Michael Cooper will stay on as an assistant.

"We are very excited to be adding a coach of George's stature to our organization," Denver general manager Kiki Vandeweghe said in a statement. "He has won everywhere he has been and his track record speaks for itself. We also want to commend Michael for the job he did under difficult circumstances."

Denver started the season as a favorite in the Western Conference after adding All-Star power forward Kenyon Martin to a team that was coming off its first playoff appearance in nine years.

The Nuggets still haven't lived up to that potential, entering Friday's game 17-20 in 12½ games out of first place in the Northwest Division.

Ref admits fixing German soccer games

FRANKFURT, Germany — A German soccer referee admitted to fixing games and said Thursday he was ready to cooperate with prosecutors to clear up the sport's biggest scandal in the country in more than 30 years.

"The accusations made against me in the public are true," referee Robert Hoyzer said in a statement issued by his lawyer.

"I regret my behavior profoundly and I excuse myself to the German soccer federation, my referee colleagues and all soccer fans," the statement said.

The German soccer federation accused Hoyzer of manipulating the outcomes of at least five games in Germany's lower divisions and the German Cup after betting on them. He initially denied the charges.

"We are shocked, we never thought something like this was possible," said Volker Rott, the federation's supervisor of referees. "But there is nothing you can do against criminal energy."

Rudi Assauer, general manager of first-division club Schalke, said, "This case is exactly what should not be happening one year before

Sports briefs

the World Cup."

Germany is hosting the 2006 World Cup.

The German soccer federation (DFB) plans to ban betting on games by referees and will install an "early warning system" to find out when usually high sums are bet on a specific game.

Hoyzer said he had given a "comprehensive, no-holds-barred account of everything he knew about the case and persons involved in it" to his lawyer, Stephan Hothoff-Pförtner.

The N24 television news channel said Hoyzer had implicated others and acknowledged the existence of an organized crime betting group.

According to a television channel in Berlin, TV.BERLIN, Hoyzer received a "five-digit" sum to manipulate games.

The German magazine Stern reported Wednesday that Hoyzer had regular contact with organized criminals from Croatia involved in betting. The DFB said it had also heard of such reports but had no means of verifying them.

On Wednesday, the DFB filed charges against Hoyzer with Berlin prosecutors, who are examining the case.

Hoyzer said he was willing to testify before state prosecutors and the DFB.

BYU player accused of lying to police will transfer

PROVO, Utah — Wide receiver Antwan Harris, accused of lying to police investigators during rape allegations against other Brigham Young football players, will transfer from BYU, the school announced.

The Garland, Texas, native had 17 interceptions for 149 yards last season.

He and defensive back Billy Skinner, 19, were suspended last month after lesser charges were lodged against them related to the rape investigation. Four other players were accused of rape and were suspended by BYU for one year.

The charge against Harris of providing false information to police is a second-degree felony.

"In response to the new direction this program is taking, with an increase in both accountability and discipline," Antwan has decided to pursue his football career at another university," coach Bronco Mendall said Wednesday. "He has my full support."

keep it and give it to the fans and let them see it."

Mientkiewicz said he will not receive any money under the deal and "probably" would get the ball back after a year.

"Ownership has not been resolved," Boston owner John Henry said in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

Mientkiewicz emphasized that he's "doing everything they asked me to do."

"I didn't expect all of this with the ball," he added. "Sometimes in life you think you're doing the right thing and it doesn't turn out that way. That's kind of what happened here. I didn't think it was going to come out to this. Like I said, I gave Derek Lowe the Game 7 ball from the ALCS, and no one seems to want that one."

He already knows what he would do if the Mets come within three outs of a World Series title.

"I'll probably ask before the ninth inning: 'What do you guys want me to do with this?'" he said.

Gatti ready to defend title against Leija

NEW YORK — In a manner matching his aggressive fighting style, Arturo Gatti simply presented his plan for his upcoming title bout against Jesse James Leija.

"I'm going to kill — not to win, to kill," the WBC super lightweight champion said at a news conference Wednesday. "I'm going to win this fight, no doubt about it. Read my lips: No doubt about it."

Gatti is especially known for his action-packed fights. His trilogy with Mickey Ward is touted by many as one of the best rivalries in boxing history, and he is consistently praised for the heart and courage he shows in the ring.

It's that kind of action that fans will be looking for from Saturday night's scheduled 12-round fight at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City. The fight will also be telecast as part of HBO's "World Championship Boxing Series."

The 32-year-old Gatti, 38-6 with 29 knockouts, won the title in January 2004, when he defeated Italian Gianluca Branco. He kept the crown in July in a one-punch knockout of previously unbeaten Leonard Dorin.

Leija, 38, is 47-6-2 with 18 knockouts.

FBI agents raid Conte home

SAN FRANCISCO — FBI agents raided the home of alleged steroid dealer Victor Conte and seized e-mail and other records Wednesday as part of an investigation of grand jury testimony leaked in a broad sports-doping scandal, according to newspaper reports.

At least a dozen agents raided Conte's San Mateo, Calif., home before 8 a.m., and within four hours seized a computer, cellular phone and lab records belonging to the founder of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative, the San Francisco Chronicle and San Jose Mercury News reported on their Web sites, each citing sources they did not identify.

The search comes a month after a series of newspaper and news reports about the 2003 grand jury testimony of San Francisco Giants slugger Barry Bonds, New York Yankees first baseman Jason Giambi, and track star Tim Montgomery. Grand jury testimony is supposed to be secret.

According to the newspapers, agents were also looking for items involving track coaches Trevor Graham of Raleigh, N.C., and John Smith of Los Angeles. FBI agents were also trying to find records to prove that Conte leaked information to journalists.

the position they do to put them in a position where they could get a chance to play every day."

Mientkiewicz came up to the major leagues with Minnesota in 1998 and was dealt to the Red Sox last July 31. A career .272 hitter, he slumped to a combined .238 with six homers and 35 RBIs last year for the Twins and Red Sox.

"I'm not 38 years old trying to hang on to a career. I feel like I've got a lot of good years left," Mientkiewicz said. "When I got over there, my intention was to play every day. But under the circumstances, Kevin got hot. I never quite got back in there, but I accepted my role because I knew it would be better for the team. I knew I could do it for three more years."

New York thinks Mientkiewicz will help its young infield, which includes third baseman David Wright, shortstop Jose Reyes and second baseman Kevin Youkilis.

"It just makes our defense that much better," Mets general manager Omar Minaya said.

Duke: Terps 'wanted it' more, stole road win

DUKE, FROM BACK PAGE

J.J. Redick led the Blue Devils with 20 points but also had eight turnovers, including two within seconds in the final minutes.

Shelden Williams added 18 points and 14 rebounds.

"You have to take your hats off to Maryland," said Duke guard Daniel Ewing, who was held to nine points. "We didn't match their hunger. They wanted it a little bit more, and that's why they walked out of here with it."

Tor-ranked Illinois (20-0) and No. 8 Boston College (17-0) are the only teams left without a loss.

Duke seemingly was in control early in the second half, taking a pair of eight-point leads, the final one on a layup by Lee Melchioni. Ewing set it up with a nifty touch pass off a rebound, and it was a matter of time.

Caner-Medley quickly led the rally. He made two free throws, then followed with a three-point shot and a jumper to cut the margin to four. Later, he added a putback to make it 47-46, and Chris McCray gave the Terps their first lead of the second half with a layup.

That was the first of five lead changes in the final 13½ minutes.

"I just think he overpowered us a few times," Coach K said. "If there's one thing that won the game, it was his desire to win was great. He put on a hell of a performance."

Ewing swished a three to put the Blue Devils ahead 58-54, but Caner-Medley responded with one of his own from several feet beyond the arc, with Redick right in his face. Caner-Medley had his final points from in close with 3:45 left to give Maryland a 64-60 lead, then left for good about 2 minutes later.

Redick had a steal at midcourt and was driving for a layup, with Caner-Medley racing back to try to stop it. They leaped together, and Redick's left-handed attempt never touched the rim.

But Caner-Medley made it only a few steps toward the other end before falling to grab his left ankle in agony. He went to the bench, and after Shavlik Randolph's points in the closing minutes, Redick's left-handed attempt never touched the rim.

"I think that you have to win a game against a quality team during the year to have credibility and believing that you're a good team," Gary Williams said. "I'm not saying that because we won. I just think that those guys have maxed out incredibly well."

"I'm sure they're very proud of what they've done."

Mets get Mientkiewicz, Red Sox get his ball

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — This much the New York Mets can count on: Doug Mientkiewicz knows how to hang onto a baseball.

The Mets acquired the former Gold Glove first baseman from the Red Sox on Wednesday for minor league first baseman Ian Bladegroen, and Mientkiewicz said he intends to loan Boston the ball he caught for the final out of the World Series.

The 30-year-old Mientkiewicz, who won the 2001 AL Gold Glove with Minnesota, said Boston asked to have the ball for one year so he could interdict easily.

"There was never a fight, there was never words exchanged. It was very cordial, and we worked something out," he said. "I want the fans to see it, and that's what both Red Sox and Mets fans want. They waited a long time to see that ball and to live it. The fact that it was just so we could

According to Red Sox General Manager Theo Epstein, "the issue was never a factor in this trade or in this negotiating process. We had a baseball decision to make."

New York obtained Mientkiewicz one day after Carlos Delgado accepted the Florida Marlins' \$52 million, four-year offer, spurning a similar proposal from New York.

"I'm honored the fact that I was probably second or third choice," Mientkiewicz said. "There are things that I bring to the table that he doesn't."

With the Red Sox, Mientkiewicz was used in the postseason as a late-inning replacement for Kevin Millar, the extroverted first baseman whom Epstein called "an integral part of our clubhouse chemistry."

"Both guys are everyday, winner-first basemen in my mind," Epstein said. "I wish you could combine them. But in the end, I think to be fair to both guys it was

BC edges Providence to remain unbeaten



Boston College's Jared Dudley drives to the basket around Providence's Ryan Gomes during the second half on Wednesday. Dudley scored 21 points to help the Eagles extend their unbeaten streak to 17 games.

The Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Boston College Eagles believe something special is happening this season, and it's not luck, either.

Jared Dudley scored 21 points and hit a three-pointer with 1:20 left to give Boston College the lead, and the No. 8 Eagles remained undefeated with a 78-75 victory over Providence on Wednesday night.

Boston College (17-0, 6-0 Big East) has the best record in school history in the regular season and conference play.

"It's just something about us," Craig Smith, who also scored 21 points, said. "We just have a feeling we can't lose right now. We always go into each game feeling we should win."

Boston College and No. 1 Illinois are the only undefeated teams left in Division I. No. 2 Duke lost for the first time Wednesday night, falling 75-66 to Maryland.

Donnie McGrath led Providence (9-9, 0-5) with 17 points, matching his season high, and made five three-pointers. Leading scorer Ryan Gomes was held to 13 points on 5-for-14 shooting. Providence has lost five straight.

A three-pointer by McGrath gave the Friars a 75-71 lead with 3:19 left in the game. BC's Jeremiah Watson then hit a floater from the baseline to draw the Eagles within two. The teams traded turnovers before Dudley's three-pointer from the left wing put BC in front.

"He's exploded this year," Smith said of Dudley, who also led the Eagles with 12 rebounds and added six assists. "He should be a named player because he's talking about that. That shows how much he's into it, and he's willing to take big shots."

Men's Top 25 Roundup

Providence's Dwight Brewington missed a three-pointer with less than a minute left, but Gomes grabbed the rebound. He whirled in the lane, but got caught in the air with two defenders on him and turned the ball over.

Watson made one free throw to give BC a 77-75 lead, but missed the second to give Providence a chance with 31 seconds left. DeSean White missed a jumper with 10 seconds remaining, and Dudley hit a free throw two seconds later to give Boston College a three-point lead.

White said he was looking for Gomes from the moment he touched the ball.

"By the time I looked down (in the lane), there was a double (team) on him, and I had to do something," said White, who finished with eight points. "So, I shot. I make that nine out of 10 times."

After Dudley's free throw, Boston College used a foul to take some time off the clock, and McGrath's three-point attempt was off the mark as time expired.

"Our kids fought hard, but I thought BC did a better job in the last couple of minutes, taking better shots while our kids took some questionable shots," Providence coach Tim Welsh said.

Providence led 41-38 at the break. Two three-pointers by Gomes and a basket by Brewington, followed by a three-pointer by McGrath, gave the Friars their biggest lead of the game at 55-44 less than four minutes into the second half. A three-point play by Smith and two baskets by Sean

Marshall got Boston College within four less than two minutes later. Neither team led by more than four points in the final 12 minutes.

"We didn't get in a panic or a frenzy," Watson said. "We just executed. We didn't get nervous. We knew we were going to come back."

No. 12 Louisville 99, Marquette 52: At Louisville, Ky., Larry O'Bannon made six three-pointers and scored 30 points, both career highs, to help Louisville (17-3, 5-1 Conference USA) hand Marquette its worst-ever loss.

Todd Townsend had 17 points for Marquette (14-5, 2-4). The 47-point margin topped the previous mark of 45 in a 57-12 loss to Creighton in 1940.

No. 14 Alabama 60, Auburn 55: At Auburn, Ala., Earnest Shelton scored 22 points and made five late three-pointers to lead Alabama to its fourth straight victory over Auburn.

The Crimson Tide (16-3, 5-1 Southeastern Conference) held on after Auburn (9-9, 0-5) had cut a 15-point deficit to one.

Northwestern 75, No. 23 Iowa 74 (OT): At Evanston, Ill., Michael Jenkins' three-pointer at the overtime buzzer hit the rim, bounced high and fell through to give Northwestern (9-9, 2-4 Big Ten) a stunning victory. The Wildcats rallied from 12 down with 3:27 to go in regulation.

Northwestern's Vedran Vukusic sent it to overtime when he hit three free throws after being fouled on a three-point attempt with 13.8 seconds left. He finished with a career-high 32 points, 13 in the final two minutes of regulation.

Greg Brunner had a career-high 28 points for Iowa (14-5, 2-4).

Huskies continue to climb under Romar

BY TIM KORTE

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Since he took over at Washington three years ago, coach Lorenzo Romar has regularly cited Arizona as the Pac-10 team program he most wanted to emulate.

Well, just look at those rising Huskies. These days, they share a remarkable resemblance to Lute Olson's Wildcats.

After breaking a five-year NCAA tournament absence last season, Washington (16-2, 6-1) is ranked No. 10 going into Thursday night's showdown at No. 11 Arizona (16-3, 6-1).

In this week's RPI ratings, the Wildcats are No. 6 and the Huskies are No. 7. It's just another area where Romar believes his program is approaching Arizona's level.

"Arizona has been doing what they do for 16 or 17 years," Romar said. "I don't think we'll have to wait another 16 years. If we're able to sustain this for a few more years, then I'll be able to say, 'Yeah, we've emulated it.'"

Washington historically wasn't a force in the Pac-10, yielding to Arizona, Stanford and UCLA. But there's no question the Huskies — a talented, unselfish squad — are contenders now.

They have their best record in 29 years, since coach Mark Hardman's team opened the 1975-76 season 17-1. The Hus-

"They have great depth, and without a doubt they are the most athletic team in the conference, with us being second."

Lute Olson
Arizona coach

kies have won 18 straight at home, the school's longest such streak in 20 years.

"They are playing lights out. They have great depth and without a doubt they are the most athletic team in the conference, with us being second," Olson said. "They have great quickness. We have better size. It will be a good game."

Washington's lineup includes athletic guard Nate Robinson, standout shooter Tre Simmons, defensive stopper Bobby Jones and steady point guard Will Conner. Off the bench, it's rebounder Jamaal Williams. "Coach Romar has prepared us very well. He has given us a formula to win," Conner said. "It's team chemistry. The set of guys we have, we really like each other. We really believe in each other."

The Huskies also have Brandon Roy, who's back after tearing a knee ligament

when Washington won the Great Alaska Shootout in November, beating current Top 25 teams Alabama, Oklahoma and Utah.

Arguably the team's most versatile player, Roy was a Seattle high school star who ultimately got straight to the NBA. Unlabeled, he picked Washington over Arizona.

"My dad said, 'You know if you pass on Arizona and go to Washington, every time Arizona beats you, it's going to eat at you.' So every time I play Arizona, I've got a chip on my shoulder," Roy said with a laugh.

Huskies fans weren't chuckling in recent years when talented in-state players led Jamal Crawford went to Michigan, Donny Marshall to Connecticut and Tim Rindour to Oregon. Jason Terry and Michael Dickerson played for Olson at Arizona.

Times are changing, though. Four Huskies starters are from Seattle and the suburbs. In November, Romar's staff landed seven heralded recruits — three key in-state players. One recruiting service listed the class No. 4 in the country.

Forward Jon Brockman from Snohomish, Wash., picked Washington over Duke, and forward Martell Webster of Seattle Prep is considered the Pac-10's top incoming recruit and No. 5 in the nation by one scouting service.

"If we had a losing season last year, we'd still have been able to get some good players but not nearly the class we have,"



In his third year at Washington, Lorenzo Romar is getting his program closer to emulating Arizona, Thursday's opponent.

Romar said. "It shows we're headed in the right direction. People are starting to believe in us."

Win or lose in the desert this week, the Huskies are rising. They've won 12 of their last 13, including three straight. Arizona is remarkably similar, winning four in a row and 13 of 14.

"Our goal wasn't to finish eighth every year," Romar said. "Our goal was eventually to be in contention to win the Pac-10." Just like Arizona.

SPORTS



Injured Owens deserves an MVP award for helping fill a two-week void, Page 28

Duke gets dumped

Alumni-inspired Terps upset No. 2 Blue Devils

BY KEITH PARSONS

The Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Maryland coach Gary Williams brought in a few experts before facing second-ranked Duke.

Former stars Steve Blake, Juan Dixon and Laron Profit visited practice this week, giving the current Terrapins a few lessons. They talked about having fun, about believing in themselves and about giving a full effort against the undefeated Blue Devils.

"That was huge," forward Nik Caner-Medley said. "That was the hardest we practiced all year."

Caner-Medley and his teammates carried that message to the game, giving Maryland an improbable upset.

The junior had 25 points before leaving with an ankle injury, and Travis Garrison

and Ekene Ibekwe finished off the Blue Devils at the free-throw line in a 75-66 victory Wednesday night.

The Terrapins (12-5, 3-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) lost three of their previous five games, all by at least 15 points. But they hung with Duke (15-1, 5-1) throughout and allowed only two points in the final 3½ minutes.

"I just thought they played a little bit harder than we did," Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "We didn't have the attitude that we've had the entire year. This team has to have an edge all the time."

Ibekwe gave Maryland the lead for good with a tough layup in traffic off an in-bounds play set up by Williams during a timeout.

That made it 66-64 with 1:23 left, and the Blue Devils had no answer.

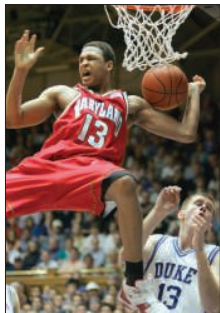
Daniel Ewing missed badly on a three-pointer, and Garrison started a parade at the line for the Terps. Garrison was 5-for-6 in the final minute and Ibekwe was 4-for-4 to close it out.

"It was all about the players," Williams said. "We struggled a little bit this year with our identity, for whatever reason, and I'll take responsibility for it, but we do have pride in our program."

Ibekwe came off the bench for the first time this season and scored 15 points. John Gilchrist had 10 for Maryland.

"To be on a big stage like this and get the win is huge," Caner-Medley said. "My teammates had so much heart. I really was impressed with them."

SEE DUKE ON PAGE 30



Maryland's Chris McCray gets a slam dunk over Duke's Lee Melchionni during the second half of the Terps' upset victory Wednesday at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Highs and lows Down Under



AP photos

Top-seeded Roger Federer, left, had his 26-match winning streak stopped by Marat Safin in a classic 4½-hour match in the Australian Open semifinals. Serena Williams, right, also played a memorable match, beating Maria Sharapova in a third-set tiebreaker. See details on Page 25.



BC escapes Providence with 17th straight win

Page 31



Determined James overcomes injury to aid Cavs' win

Page 27

Five tied atop leader board after first round of Hope Classic Page 29